



Unprepared for (re)integration

Lessons learned from Afghanistan, Somalia and Syria
on Refugee Returns to Urban Areas

PART B: Ten lessons learnt
to improve (re)integration

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Front cover photo: A man prepares to load his luggage to leave the reception center in Berbera, Somaliland 2015
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Key concepts and definitions

Displaced persons are persons or groups of persons, including asylum seekers, refugees and internally displaced persons, who are outside their homes or places of residence for reasons related to fear of persecution, conflict, generalised violence or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order.

Durable solution is achieved when displaced persons no longer have any specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination on account of their displacement. It can be achieved through sustainable (re)integration at the place of origin (voluntary return), local integration in areas where displaced persons take refuge or in another part of their country based on their choice. For refugees, it can also be achieved through resettlement in a third country. (ReDSS)

Host community refers to the community within which displaced persons reside. (GCER)¹

Internally displaced persons are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular, as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognised state border.²

Non-refoulement is the cornerstone of refugee protection. Set out in Article 33(1) of the 1951 Refugee Convention, it requires that *"no contracting state shall expel or return a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his (or her) life or freedom would be threatened"*.³

Preparedness refers to a proactive and planned response to emergency, disasters or, in the context of this study, to situations of return. The IASC speaks of preparedness as an inter-agency, common and planned approach. Preparedness is multidimensional and multilevelled, at individual/household, community, organisational or state levels. (IASC)⁴

Refugee is a person who, *"...owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his (or her) nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself (or herself) of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his (or her) former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it"*. (Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Convention) **1951 Convention** refers to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (also known as the 1951 Refugee Convention).

Sustainable (re)integration – There is no universal definition of the term "(re)integration". The IASC Framework highlights eight criteria to be used when considering whether durable solutions have been achieved, namely: safety and security; adequate standard of living; access to livelihoods; restoration of housing, land and property; access to documentation; family reunification; participation in public affairs, and access to effective remedies and justice.⁵ Meanwhile, UNHCR sees (re)integration as *"equated with the achievement of a sustainable return – in other words the ability of returning refugees to secure the political, economic, (legal) and social conditions needed to maintain*

1 Global Cluster for Early Recovery (2017). Durable Solutions in Practice.

2 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. UN Doc. E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2.

3 1951 Convention, Article 33(1). A similar formulation is also found in Article 3(i) of the UN Declaration on Territorial Asylum adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1967.

4 See IASC (2015) Early Response Preparedness. See also Cassarino (2014) A Case for Return Preparedness.

5 Brookings Institution – University of Bern Project on Internal Displacement (2010). IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons.

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life, livelihood and dignity, (and) a process that should result in the disappearance of differences in legal rights and duties and the equal access of returnees to services, assets and opportunities".⁶

Voluntary repatriation is the return to country of origin "on refugees' free and informed decision".⁷ The essential requirement for repatriation to be voluntary is the counterpart of the principle of non-refoulement. The facilitation of voluntary repatriation is one of the basic functions of UNHCR.⁸

Youth is defined by the UN as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24.

⁶ UNHCR (2004). Handbook for Repatriation and Reintegration Activities.

⁷ Adapted from IOM (2019) Glossary on Migration.

⁸ UNHCR (1980). Note on Voluntary Repatriation. EC/SCP/13.



PART B

Ten lessons learnt
to improve
(re)integration



Preparedness for returns

Having reviewed the factors influencing (re)integration, we turn to the main question of this study: *“How can returnees, receiving communities, governments and organisations be more effectively prepared so as to lay the ground and work towards sustainable (re)integration?”* To answer this question, this chapter presents three lessons learnt based on existing gaps and the steps needed before return takes place.

The GCR is framed as the vehicle through which refugee response can become more holistic and structured, such as by looking at (re)integration from the very beginning. Analysts have long argued that, *“all stakeholders in the process need to prepare effectively for reintegration to succeed... at an individual and institutional level”*.¹¹³ A consensus among key informants is the fact that (re)integration programming starts after return, with insufficient consultation with returnees themselves before they return. Three lessons learnt are set out below to correct these gaps in future (re)integration programming:

1. Redefine who qualifies for assistance as a returnee and benchmarks for identifying conditions for dignified return.
2. Improve information-sharing to allow refugees to make informed and dignified return decisions.
3. Support host countries to provide better hosting conditions in order to more equally share the responsibility for principled return and (re)integration planning.

Across these three areas, we present what works and what can work for a stronger focus on preparedness.

1. Defining who is a returnee and when a situation is conducive to returns

1.1 Who is a returnee?

Political decisions often determine the timing of returns, who qualifies as a returnee and who qualifies for assistance. In countries where refugee registration has been stopped, or where the refugee

status determination system is weak, many who need support may be ineligible to receive it, as they may not be considered to be documented refugees or returnees. Iran, Lebanon, Pakistan and Kenya are examples of settings where a gap in registration has led to populations of undocumented refugees. Partly because of hosting governments’ interest in reducing numbers, formal processes to register refugees are lacking. Additionally, changes in the way refugee registration processes are conducted are not adequately communicated to refugees, resulting in refugees not having documentation that would prove their entitlement to assistance.

Redefining who is a returnee. As well as recognised refugees returning under the umbrella of UNHCR, NRC¹¹⁴ highlights three categories of returnees who may not have formal refugee status but who should be supported before, during and after return:

- individuals and groups who do not have refugee status due to national legislation in the hosting country, but who may meet criteria for refugee status under international law
- individuals and groups who have received protection in a host country through temporary schemes, but whose right to stay under those schemes has expired
- individuals who do not qualify as refugees but who may require protection under the human rights principle of non-refoulement to torture or inhuman and degrading treatment

This expanded definition is critical to developing coherent return operations globally. The lack of equity in return operations is currently illustrated in the unequal assistance given to documented refugees, while others, who may have lost their refugee status or documentation, receive less support.

In recent return movements, Afghan refugees have received different aid packages, depending on their asylum and documentation status, determining whether their support would come from UNHCR or IOM, based on whether they were registered, card-carrying refugees. This distinction created confusing administrative rifts and exacerbated vulnerability. What should have been a single group – that of refugees – became two groups: the documented and the undocumented. This caused tensions within the community as well as impeding the fulfilment of the rights of those who were

¹¹³ Battistella (2018). Return migration: A conceptual and policy framework.

¹¹⁴ NRC (2017a).



Haji Mukhtar (approx. 75, center), originally from eastern Afghanistan, waits for a cash grant to be distributed by IRC. © A Quilty / IRC

undocumented. This confusion obstructed access to clear and unbiased information for many refugees. While the UN humanitarian coordinator (HC) in Afghanistan has requested a commitment to better harmonise the assistance between UNHCR and IOM, fully equalising the two forms of assistance remains challenging and unlikely.

In Somalia, geographic rather than asylum status determines the level of attention or aid provided. Those returning from Dadaab under the repatriation programme are the primary focus of attention, eclipsing spontaneous and other returns from Djibouti, Ethiopia and Yemen. This is despite the fact that the number of spontaneous returns is much higher than that reflected in official statistics and that there is a real need to address these populations. Between 2015 and 2018, UNHCR assisted 82,840 Somalis in returning from Kenya; over 110,000 spontaneous returns from Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti were also recorded, but most did not receive return packages.¹¹⁵

1.2 When is a situation conducive to returns?

The second and crucial dilemma for operational agencies remains engaging with the issues of voluntariness and safety and defining a threshold for conduciveness to return when it comes to supporting both spontaneous and assisted returns.¹¹⁶ UNHCR's joint role as custodian of refugee protection and official counterpart to governments on refugee issues requires a careful balancing act. The importance of avoiding premature and/or forced returns, and of UNHCR's role in influencing these processes, cannot be underestimated. Evidence shows that prematurely induced returns result in increased needs and exposure to risks among returnees, such as cycles of displacement and exile.¹¹⁷ The dilemma is not unique to UNHCR: NGOs must also make difficult judgement calls. Engagement around returns may be viewed as endorsing or incentivising the process, but disengagement can be contrary to the humanitarian imperative to respond. Decisions require

¹¹⁵ Figures provided by NRC, February 2019.

¹¹⁶ Human Rights Watch (2016).

¹¹⁷ World Bank (2017d).

humanitarian principles to be upheld, ensuring a rights-based, people-centred and principled approach that avoids humanitarian agencies being instrumentalised by political interest.

In some countries, steps have been taken to address this delicate balance. In Somalia, concerns about UNHCR's position over the start of a repatriation process, in 2016, culminated in high-level NGO–UNHCR meetings designed to strengthen mechanisms to support the voluntariness of return. One of the outcomes of these meetings was to acknowledge that NGOs would need to intervene more firmly on protection and assistance to returnees. The landscape on returns has since changed, with multiple durable solutions initiatives and consortia led by NGOs in Somalia.¹¹⁸ However, the process lacked the pre-planning seen in the Syrian context, where minimum thresholds for returns were established. This had not happened in either Afghanistan or Somalia, and will need to be applied across future return operations.

1.3 Lessons from Syria: thresholds and parameters for returns

In what is seen as a principled step in relation to Syria, UNHCR has published 22 protection thresholds to be met before repatriation can be facilitated (see Box 2). This approach may face significant tests in the coming months and years, amid questions from operational

agencies working on Syria asking how to maintain collective adherence and the triggers for engagement. However, it is a result of and can be supported by strong inter-agency advocacy on returns to Syria to ensure these thresholds can be met.

How to engage when refugees return voluntarily to a situation that is not safe

Refugees may decide to return to situations that are not considered safe, as seen in the case of Syria. The decision as to whether or not an organisation engages in returns to potentially unsafe settings needs to be made in consultation with refugees and communicated back to them. Being transparent in the decision-making process will ensure that refugees have an understanding of the support they can or cannot expect. Such clarity has often been limited, leading to a gap between expectations and reality.¹¹⁹ FGD participants in Afghanistan frequently expressed frustration at the disconnect between the support they were expecting to receive and the realities of this support once they returned. Increasing transparency must be linked to two aspects: access and inter-agency planning.

When international organisations cannot guarantee access, local relays have to be strengthened inside countries of origin. The imperative is to better plan on mechanisms to **engage more strategically inside countries of origin**. In Syria, for instance, NGOs as well as UN agencies experience significant access challenges (and in some cases, lack of access), particularly to some

Box 2. UNHCR's Protection Thresholds in Relation to Returns to Syria*

UNHCR's Comprehensive Protection and Solutions Strategy describes two phases of planning and sets out 22 protection thresholds to guide the decision to consider a formal shift to facilitating organised large-scale repatriation (Phase 2).

In Phase 1, the necessary conditions are not in place for safe and dignified return, but some self-organised returns occur. At this point, return should not be encouraged. Engagement is limited to planning, monitoring, counselling, advocacy and ongoing analysis of obstacles to and conditions necessary for return, and to identifying the actions needed to address them. Self-organised returnees are assisted via ongoing humanitarian programmes.

Under Phase 1, preparing for return includes technical assessment of information required for planning, and of legal frameworks to ensure structured processes. It also highlights the importance of engaging with refugee communities, strengthening communication with them in host countries to tailor information products for refugee audiences. The primacy of counselling and information in ensuring the voluntary character of return is explicitly mentioned.

In Phase 2, a shift to large-scale voluntary repatriation would be governed by four criteria:

1. Legal framework(s) guaranteeing the rights of returnees and unhindered access to them are in place.
2. Clear evidence of protection thresholds being met in the place(s) of return. One of the 22 thresholds states that "every individual's decision to return is informed and genuinely voluntary, without any coercion".
3. Conditions in return areas show improvement.
4. Refugees actively request support from UNHCR to return in large numbers.

Phase 2 activities include the legal frameworks for return, such as tripartite agreements, and supporting a robust return operation through return packages, referral systems and other forms of assistance.

* UNHCR (2018c).

¹¹⁸ ReDSS/Samuel Hall/SDRI (2019).

¹¹⁹ DRC/Mixed Migration Centre (2019). Distant Dreams: Understanding the aspirations of Afghan returnees.



A child rests at the reception center in Bossaso, Puntland, Somalia 2015. © Axel Fassio / DRC

parts of the country. In all three contexts, working with local partners to enhance access for monitoring and scenario planning for returns is an essential element of pre-return planning. Working with local partners to enhance access for monitoring and scenario planning for returns are essential elements of the pre-return planning. In such cases, a vetting system for organisations will be needed – whether civil society organisations or diaspora-led organisations – to ensure that they are able to respond, and that their positioning within a conflict will not pose any risks.

As collective responses to returns need to be formulated and shared with refugees, **the IASC framework on preparedness and contingency planning provides guiding steps.**¹²⁰ In Afghanistan, inter-agency advocacy and planning on returns proved to be ad hoc in the face of mass returns from Pakistan and absent in the context of returns from Iran and Europe. In early 2018, the Afghan government chaired a contingency planning meeting with officials and donors, UN agencies (OCHA,

UNHCR) and NRC. The meeting called for a diplomatic negotiation and contingency planning for the possibility of forced returns. It committed to delinking the political from the humanitarian, as well as to encourage dialogue and the distribution of responsibilities. It also provided a platform for OCHA to advocate that active conflict in many parts of the country rendered returns unsafe. However, beyond such platforms, inter-agency planning and the ‘how to’ engage with returns and returnees in contexts that are unsafe were limited. The IASC Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Guidelines for Humanitarian Assistance need to be adapted to such situations to reinforce reintegration assistance.

In Somalia, in 2015–2016, the humanitarian country team (HCT) developed an inter-agency contingency plan (IACP) to facilitate response interventions, including supporting displaced populations seeking to return to their homes. Such efforts on disaster risk reduction measures can be adapted and applied to the planning on (re)integration.



Key Takeaways

1. The refugee returnee definition should be widened to include those who do not have official refugee status, those whose temporary protection status may have expired and those who may require protection under the principle of non-refoulement.
2. Protection thresholds for facilitating organised returns are required to enhance pre-planning and for determining when situations are conducive to returns and to the engagement of humanitarian actors.
3. Common standards for return and (re)integration preparedness and planning can be achieved by using existing frameworks more systematically. The IASC Contingency Planning Guidelines for Humanitarian Assistance, Common Framework for Preparedness, and Emergency Response Preparedness Guidelines represent examples of what this can look like.

¹²⁰ IASC (2007). Inter-agency contingency planning guidelines for humanitarian assistance; IASC (2013). Common Framework for Preparedness; IASC (2015). Emergency Response Preparedness Guidelines.

2. Improving information-sharing with refugees and returnees

There is a need for greater coherence in the type and channels of information accessible to refugees and returnees. When returnees were asked, in FGDs, what information they received and from where, answers varied widely: *“The community elders visited Mansehra camps [in Pakistan] and organised a meeting, and told us if we return to our country [Afghanistan], they would provide us with land [and cash] per family member. Their promise [of cash] was true, but their other promises, including the allocation of land, were lies,”* said one participant in Nangarhar. In Kabul, another FGD participant had a different experience: *“We heard from our relatives that Afghanistan was peaceful. Also, Pakistan forcefully evicted migrants, saying Afghanistan was peaceful and that we should go back. We did not get enough information from anyone.”* Access to information – including country of origin information – is key in preparing for voluntary, safe and dignified returns.¹²¹ Preparedness and information are prerequisites for sustainable (re)integration.¹²² In order to make a voluntary decision to return, refugees need to make informed choices. Accessible, tailored and unbiased information is crucial.

Refugees cannot just rely on their social networks for information; time, distance, the cost of a phone call and difficulties in communicating across borders are all impediments to the flow of information through these networks. Refugees and returnees may have their own information sources; however, they need to be able to triangulate and verify this information. In some cases, temporary return allows them to do this: go-and-see visits are one way in which this occurs (see Box 3). In Kenya,

Somali women left behind in Dadaab would actively seek information from the returns help desk but would not always obtain up-to-date or enough information¹²³ to inform their return decisions. Humanitarian and development actors must understand the information pathways that refugees use and trust in order to tap into them, to complement them and ensure that information matches the needs of refugees and is being disseminated using trusted channels. This requires consultation and the mapping of information flows.

Raising awareness – not hopes

Whether about the safety of the return journey, existing levels of return assistance or opportunities for jobs that match skills, information gaps are many and varied and need to be appropriately filled to ensure that potential returnees are fully able to make informed choices.

Return operations must prepare for the significant risk of renewed displacement upon return. Returnees may live in internal displacement as returnee IDPs:¹²⁴ unable to return to their place of origin or being displaced after returning to their place of origin due to conflict, violence, persecution or disaster. Returnees in contexts such as Afghanistan and Somalia end up joining the ranks of millions of displaced persons. Returnees may settle in urban areas to avoid being displaced several more times. However, it is challenging for agencies to share information with returnees after they cross the border. This should not be the case. In many instances, UN agencies and NGOs are present in both the country of displacement (for example, Kenya) and the country of return (for example, Somalia). Information-sharing should be feasible across these contexts but is often determined by the asylum space (in Kenya) and access (in Somalia). Practice shows that maintaining the appearance of impartiality is a particularly complex task.¹²⁵

Box 3. A Shortage of Reliable Information: The Importance of Go-and-See Visits

Accessing accurate information on conduciveness to return can be a challenge for both refugees and humanitarian actors. Refugees can triangulate sources, but investing in accurate, reliable and impartial information makes the (re)integration process more sustainable.

One way to address the information shortage is to increase opportunities for refugees to see at first-hand the situation in their country of origin, to learn whether those conditions would suit them and their families, to allow them to ask questions at the source and avoid potential inaccurate relays of information. Such initiatives have been successful in Somalia but are rare in Afghanistan. Reaching a common agreement that these go-and-see visits can be helpful in protracted refugee situations would be a step forward. When not organised in a responsible manner, informal visits can divide families and hamper return arrangements and, in turn, can compromise the safety of those left behind.

121 OHCHR (2001). Monitoring and Protecting the Human Rights of Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons. Chapter XI in Training Manual on Human Rights Monitoring, 234; see: <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/training7part1112en.pdf>

122 Cassarino (2004).

123 UNHCR/Samuel Hall (2015).

124 IDMC/Samuel Hall/NRC (2017). Going “Home” to Displacement: Afghanistan’s returnee-IDPs.

125 Key informant interview with NRC (March 2019).

One of the ways in which organisations have attempted to address this complexity is by linking information-sharing with social cohesion activities after return. In Afghanistan, UNESCO has piloted a programme to support social activities and information-sharing through cultural and sports events, along with job opportunities. One way of including specific groups, such as youth, in outreach and awareness-raising efforts is by reinforcing information flows through social interactions among different groups including host communities and returnees.

Return packages: addressing the gaps in support and the reality on the ground

Another opportunity to focus on information-sharing is to revise the current approach to return packages. Return packages can provide a stronger link between assistance and information and should not simply be regarded as a mechanism for providing cash assistance. The scale and purpose of cash grants offered in return packages is a tricky issue, given concerns that the greater the support, the greater the risk of incentivising return that is not entirely voluntary or well informed. Focus group participants said that cash assistance had been useful and necessary to them on their return, even though the support was short term. However, NGO informants interviewed for this study highlighted the risk that, with cash incentives, some refugees will choose to reluctantly return to unsafe areas in order to access money that would otherwise be unavailable to them. This concern has been raised in Afghanistan, in Somalia and for Syrian refugees. In UNHCR's research, in 2014, over 30% of Afghan returnees had cited the return package as a pull factor for their return.¹²⁶

In Somalia, the size of the package was enhanced to include a monthly education grant of up to US\$25 per school-going child for one year, along with two unconditional cash grants per person,¹²⁷ meaning that Somali households of ten or more people could receive grants of US\$4,000 or more. Amidst concerns that the package could both incentivise returns and cause tensions with other vulnerable groups in the country, some donors, such as ECHO, have refused to finance such return packages. Other challenges pertaining to cash grants include the following:

- **The risk is greater when grants are provided in hosting environments where refugees face reductions in assistance and inhospitable environments.** There is a need to assess return packages carefully to ensure they are not

disproportionate and do not act as a pull to locations that are deemed unsafe.

- **The sustainability of return packages needs to be addressed by linking short-term needs (for example, cash) with information that can strengthen protection and (re)integration.** The fact that return packages mainly take the form of cash grant packages limits their support to the (re)integration process, as referral mechanisms or linkages with assistance are not included. Key informants indicate the need to tailor packages to make them part of sustainable planning from the start and as a more reliable source of information for returnees.
- **Communications on return packages need to be streamlined and expectations managed if these packages are to be seen as a reliable source of support.** *"We need to be very clear about what people will get, what support will come, when it will come, and when it will stop. There needs to be strong engagement of agencies on the ground through an established mechanism."*¹²⁸ There are gaps in the provision of information, particularly in terms of how to access available services, the cost, and the need to explain that support mechanisms in the country of origin will not be a continuation of what was provided in the host country setting.

Documentation: informing returnees of their right to have rights

*"The right to be recognised as a person before the law is one of the most basic human rights."*¹²⁹

Helping refugees to obtain documentation is critical for their dignity and identity, as well as for access to services. It opens the door to all other rights. Information and awareness-raising about the importance of documentation are critical steps in preparing for returns. Many returnees are not aware of the importance of documentation or how to obtain it. The mayor of Jalalabad summarised the confusing bureaucratic processes upon return as follows: *"Returnees do not know where to go, where to seek support. The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation sends them to the municipal office, we send them to the Land Authority. The Land Authority says we need the presidential decree, or orders from the minister. It takes a long time [to access the information they need]."*

Documentation challenges apply to all refugees and impact them, and their children, after return. A major political, legal and humanitarian imperative in refugee contexts is the recognition and documentation of

126 UNHCR (2015). Enhanced Voluntary Return and Reintegration Package for Afghan Refugees (EVRPP).

127 UNHCR (2018d). Somalia – Repatriation Update, 1–30 June 2018.

128 Key informant interview, Mercy Corps, Kabul (March 2019).

129 NRC/Samuel Hall (2016). Access to Tazkera and other civil documentation in Afghanistan.



IDP grocery shop in IDP settlement in Gardo, Puntland, Somalia, 2014. © Axel Fassio/DRC

refugees' status, and greater information on the legal processes they need to undertake to secure their access to services, housing and livelihoods upon return. The point here is that refugees need support to access documentation in their hosting country and, equally, in their country of origin.

In March 2018, the Jordanian Ministry of Interior and UNHCR launched a regularisation campaign to legalise the stay of Syrian refugees in urban areas. The initiative, funded by ECHO and led by six NGOs, provided legal assistance and information for almost 20,000 families.¹³⁰ The same steps are needed in all refugee settings to avoid large unregistered populations, whether of the millions living in Iran and Pakistan or the tens of

thousands living in Kenya, who are today considered as undocumented refugees. Prior to and after return, refugees need to know how and where to access services. Key services include documentation, education and legal services. Cross-border programming is essential to provide this assistance to refugees and returnees. The Afghan government and the World Bank are engaging on Component 1 of their EZ-KAR project to reinforce documentation and information in Pakistan, planning for biometric identification documents, providing a helpline for refugees as well as reinforcing consular capacities in-country through a temporary surge of capacity.



Key Takeaways

1. Systematically provide opportunities for go-and-see visits for refugee representatives. Refugees do not all have social networks to rely on for information and should be offered the opportunity to carry out a first-hand assessment of return settings.
2. Ensure that information is provided in respect of the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, independence and impartiality. One step would be to revise return packages by including a stronger information component. Return packages need to be more than just instruments for cash grant provision and should avoid incentivising unsafe and uninformed returns.
3. Access to documentation and awareness about the importance of documentation needs to be developed before return. Stakeholders need to plan for refugees to have official documentation and information on the services and rights they can access with this documentation.

¹³⁰ DRC (2018). Helping Syrian refugees in Jordan in legal documentation.

3. Better hosting for better reintegration

Preparedness for return and (re)integration also needs to focus on advocacy around better hosting of refugees and other migrants in countries of asylum. Focus group participants in Afghanistan and Somalia comment that those with greater financial, human and social capital – that is, those who fared better in their host country – often fare better on return. This relationship is often overlooked in both policy and practice.

The types of skills and experience gained in asylum countries influence access to opportunities at home. For instance, Somali returnees from Kenya, where many were educated or conducted business in English, are often better placed to secure coveted roles with international aid organisations, government or in education. Some of those returning from Yemen, where refugees had relatively better work opportunities, have opened successful restaurants or do well in construction. *“Since they come from modernised countries, they have helped build our social life... they have showed us ways to improve our business since they understand business. When our kids interact with their kids, they help our kids by educating them,”* noted a host community member in Mogadishu.

In contrast, when displaced populations are unable or are not permitted to work, they do not develop skills

and may even lose existing skills over time, making it difficult to re-enter the workforce. The same is true for those who have gaps in their education or who have been schooled under a different system over an extended period. Adapting and (re)integrating for these groups is more problematic.¹³¹ Situations of mass vulnerability make competition for scarce resources, including humanitarian assistance, extreme. When returnees are perceived as being relatively well off – as is the case with Somali returnees from Kenya – resentment can build when they appear to be favoured for jobs, housing or other support.

3.1 Advances in refugee hosting: how to leverage for returnees

The link between better hosting and better (re)integration requires more coordination and leadership by development actors. Despite calls that refugees want to learn and acquire skills relevant to them on their return, engagement to date has split local integration and (re)integration into disconnected processes. Lessons can be learnt from development actors’ investments in better hosting and expanded to include a link to (re)integration. This offers an opportunity for greater responsibility-sharing and for the upcoming GRF in December 2019.



DRC is distributing firewood in the settlements in Kabul, Afghanistan, 2013. © Axel Fassio/DRC

131 World Bank (2017d).

Box 4. Jordan Compact: Jobs for Syrian Refugees in Exchange for Incentives

February 2016 saw the establishment of the Jordan Compact to enable Syrian refugees to access low-skilled work and education in the country. The World Bank rewarded Jordan with concessional loans subsidised by international donors. The terms included US\$1.7 billion in grants over three years to support infrastructure projects, a ten-year exemption from the EU rules of origin (a tariff barrier) for producers in Jordan who met an employment quota for Syrian refugees and a commitment from the Jordanian government to create 200,000 jobs for Syrians.

Because the compact focuses on work permits for (often) low-skilled workers, rather than actual jobs, there have been challenges in translating policy opportunities into sustainable livelihoods for Syrians. Protection concerns were also not adequately addressed by the Jordan Compact mechanisms, according to key informants for our study. Many refugees work in the informal sector, experience documentation issues and mistrust official institutions, all of which remain obstacles to increased formality. Similarly, education enrolment rates were lower than expected, as issues such as proximity to schools and child protection were not addressed. Nevertheless, the model represents a recognition that investing in refugees' self-reliance can bring economic benefits to refugee-hosting countries and that using economic and political incentives, such as trade deals and loans, can open up a restrictive policy environment and quickly mobilise large amounts of development funding.* Such models need to be expanded to identify opportunities to build skills adapted to return settings.

* Barbelet, Hagen-Zanker and Mansour-Ille (2018). *The Jordan Compact: Lessons learnt and implications for future refugee compacts*.

The past five years have seen a paradigm shift in refugee hosting, precipitated by the Syrian refugee crisis and its implications for Europe, and informed by inter-agency experience and policy responses to decades of protracted internal displacement. In some contexts, short-term humanitarian assistance and social protection programmes for refugees have given way to the economic inclusion of refugees in development processes. This approach is encompassed in the GCR and the CRRF, including new models of refugee hosting, new funding mechanisms and new modalities of engagement with development and private sector actors (see Box 4), as well as innovations in aid architecture and delivery.

Approaches focused on improving the quality of asylum for refugees could be tested in (re)integration

settings. When return is deemed to be safe, voluntary and in dignity, political attention tends to focus on repatriation rather than (re)integration. As protracted crises constitute a development agenda with humanitarian consequences,¹³² the same logic can be applied to returnees in fragile contexts. Including a more explicit development agenda and development actors in planning can help to address this fragility and provide a path towards thinking in the longer term.

This requires a fundamental shift, not only in the way services are coordinated, but on how aid is conceptualised, funding is accessed and people are targeted. This recommends a step towards the better integration of global policy agendas – the nexus and Grand Bargain agendas¹³³ – and a better integration of (re)integration in that agenda.



Key Takeaways

1. The types of skills and experience gained in asylum countries influence access to opportunities upon return.
2. The link between better hosting and better (re)integration requires more coordination, acceptance, and leadership by development actors, learning from the advances in refugee hosting. This requires a fundamental shift, not only in the way services are coordinated, but in the way aid is conceptualised, funding is accessed and people are targeted.
3. Approaches focused on improving the quality of asylum for refugees could be tested in (re)integration settings through new funding windows. The International Development Association (IDA) sub-windows for refugees and host communities could be replicated as a model for returnees and host communities in return settings.*

* The IDA Regional Sub-Windows are International Development Association dedicated funds for low-income countries. The IDA18 Regional Sub-Window for Refugees and Host Communities and the replenishment fund in 2019, (IDA19), were focused on funds for low-income countries hosting large numbers of refugees; IDA (2018). *IDA18 Regional Sub-Window for Refugees and Host Communities*; see: <http://ida.worldbank.org/replenishments/ida-18replenishments/ida18-regional-sub-window-for-refugees-host-communities>

¹³² Kälinand Chapuisat (2017). *Breaking the Impasse: Reducing Protracted Internal Displacement as a Collective Outcome*.

¹³³ Grand Bargain Initiative – Summary. *Agenda for Humanity*; see: <https://www.agendaforhumanity.org/initiatives/3861>; see also, as an example: IASC Task Team on Strengthening the Humanitarian/Development Nexus with a focus on protracted contexts; see: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-task-team-strengthening-humanitariananddevelopment-nexus-focus-protracted-contexts>



Supporting immediate return movements

When recounting their return, returnees speak of the logistical arrangements made to either return spontaneously or through a repatriation programme or, in some cases, a complete lack of arrangement when their return was forced upon them. Refugees speak of push factors in the hosting context, the fears and difficulties of crossing the border safely, as well as concerns that their assets, mainly land and housing, would be gone. As a result, what happens during the return process also requires attention. When this research asks, *“How can returnees, receiving communities, governments and organisations be more effectively prepared so as to lay the ground and work towards sustainable (re)integration?”*, the actual return process must be included. While previous sources¹³⁴ have focused on human rights aspects (specifically, the voluntariness of return and the types of return), this section will focus on the role of regional, national and local actors in ensuring a safe and dignified return process.

Refugee movements and return have a regional dimension, as nationals have to cross state borders to seek protection and return to localities in their country of origin. Regional and cross-border commitments are often lacking; yet, they could become the basis for the responsibility-sharing required. This section puts forward lessons learnt to address the gap in support to return movements by zooming in on three important and necessary steps:

- building on regional agreements to bolster responsibility-sharing for returns
- designing cross-border approaches that can adapt to refugees’ return decisions
- planning local responses with a focus on housing, land and property rights

This part examines what works and what can work based on lessons learnt in supporting immediate return movements.



Returnee children waiting for their parents in a packed vehicle at transit center near Torkham crossing. © NRC/Enayatullah Azad

134 OHCHR (2001).

4. Building on regional agreements to bolster responsibility-sharing

Regional approaches are crucial in order to facilitate plans that ensure refugee protection before and during return. These include tripartite agreements between hosting countries, origin countries and UNHCR. These agreements provide the overall legal framework to facilitate return; however, they cover only those with formal status. There are various shortcomings with tripartite agreements as they have been conceived to date.

First, tripartite agreements are often agreed upon hastily and under intense political pressure. Lessons from the Kenya–Somalia Tripartite Agreement highlight, as emphasised by key informants, a political process under pressure from the Kenyan government. This resulted in confusion in the way return should happen, compromising on refugee safety as returns occurred to places without sufficient support. The agreements reached between Kenya and Somalia, and Afghanistan and Pakistan, highlight the shortcomings of agreements that focus heavily on return, with limited accountability measures. Stronger discussions are needed on the establishment of humanitarian aid channels, commitments to security en route, voluntary returns and family reunification processes, among others. Although important advances over the past decade have fostered a movement towards regional approaches, in each country under review, these have fallen short of ensuring the commitment of political and operational actors and have struggled to establish a functional and achievable framework for solving, or at least easing, regional displacement crises.

Second, tripartite agreements have been criticised for limiting engagement to a few stakeholders – and often not including refugees in the decision-making process. Historically, *“UNHCR decides the if, when and how of return movements without including the refugees in any of the formal decision-making processes pertaining to the planned voluntary repatriation exercise.”*¹³⁵ The UNHCR handbook on voluntary repatriation, published in 1993, clarified that it would be, *“possible and even desirable to include the refugees and establish a quadripartite commission”*.¹³⁶ However,

more often than not, commissions are tripartite, bound to governments and UNHCR, and are the only legitimate forum to discuss major repatriation issues. The 1996 revised handbook merely mentions that, *“the refugee community should be kept informed of the progress of repatriation negotiations. Formal representation of the refugee community can be considered.”*¹³⁷ The GCR and CRRF provide an opportunity to strengthen the voice of refugees and returnees, as they emphasise the centrality of representation. This is highly important for durable solutions processes, including to support return and sustainable (re)integration in countries of origin.

Nevertheless, momentum to engage in more extensive regional plans, including a larger number of stakeholders, has been noted. In 2014, the six countries hosting the greatest number of Somali refugees – Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Uganda and Yemen – adopted a number of commitments.¹³⁸ In 2017, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) governments¹³⁹ signed the Nairobi Declaration and Plan of Action on Durable Solutions for Somali Refugees and Reintegration of Returnees in Somalia. These agreements provide a regional platform and framework that seek to create conditions for safe, sustainable and voluntary return and the (re)integration of Somali refugees while, at the same time, maintaining protection and asylum space in hosting countries. Going forward, national action plans will be developed in all six countries to specify actions required to deliver on the commitments made.

These action plans are still being discussed, two years after the Nairobi Declaration was endorsed, and highlight the lengthy process required to bring governments on board and to align implementation. Despite providing a basis for both political and strategic progress on thematic areas (education and livelihoods, for example),¹⁴⁰ these commitments have not translated into an overall regional framework for addressing the return of Somali refugees. As a result, responsibility for return has been detached from (re)integration planning. Any action plan has to now include the centrality of a harmonised support to the return process in order to enhance (re)integration prospects.

The approach in Afghanistan is starkly different and is still limited to just a few stakeholders. The Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) is the result of a

135 Zieck (1997). UNHCR and Voluntary Repatriation of Refugees: A Legal Analysis.

136 UNHCR (1993), 4.

137 UNHCR (1996), 34.

138 UNHCR (2014). Addis Ababa Commitment towards Somali Refugees.

139 The member states of IGAD are Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda. IGAD’s mission is to assist and complement the efforts of the member states to achieve, through increased cooperation, food security and environmental protection, peace and security, and economic cooperation and integration in the region.

140 Djibouti Declaration on Refugee Education (2017); IGAD (2019), Kampala Declaration on Jobs, Livelihoods and Self-Reliance for Refugees, Returnees and Host Communities in the IGAD Region.



A focus group discussion with community members discussing return, Jalalabad, 2019. © Abdul Basir Mohmand /Samuel Hall

process between Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, as well as UNHCR. The SSAR was initiated in 2011 to identify and implement solutions for Afghan refugees in the region. While the SSAR was seen as a step towards regional approaches, its operationalisation has been limited for a number of reasons.¹⁴¹ First, the gap in implementation is linked to concerns that the SSAR is more of a humanitarian funding vehicle than a state-backed mechanism. A second concern relates to the lack of coverage of the return process and measures to safeguard the dignified, safe and voluntary nature of returns. A third concern is the over-reliance on return as the preferred solution, without due consideration being given to other durable solutions or to the voices of the refugees themselves. A fourth is the lack of consultation and inclusion of civil society organisations. To ensure that the regional commitment is a collective one, all of these concerns need to be included in the way that governments, UNHCR and the international community collaborate on durable solutions to the Afghan refugee situation.

Syria's Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) is seen by key informants as a response to these gaps. A strategic response for countries neighbouring Syria that have been impacted by the influx of Syrian refugees, the 3RP spans five Syrian refugee-hosting countries – Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey – and incorporates humanitarian relief, resilience and stabilisation. It comprises country-level chapters that have activity and resource plans developed under the leadership of national authorities. The activity and resource plans are then harmonised into an overall regional strategy, overseen by an inter-agency 3RP steering committee. Theoretically, all durable solutions within the 3RP are part of a comprehensive response, and country operations are framed according to legal, material and physical safety components. In practice, regional governments still position return as a first and preferred solution and have shown little support for local integration. Further political efforts are needed to ensure that all durable solutions are prepared, especially when returns may be neither feasible nor in line with international commitments.



Key Takeaways

1. Political reluctance to consider solutions other than return is an impediment to effective regional initiatives and the development of strong durable solutions that support a dignified life. However, some steps have been taken to address this, such as the Nairobi Declaration and Plan of Action, which provides an opportunity to integrate and align standards on durable solutions as part of legal changes required within each member state.
2. Returns processes require a broader geographic coverage and the inclusion of a more consultative approach to designing solutions alongside civil society actors and refugees.
3. Existing repatriation handbooks lack the involvement of refugee and returnee voices, including in quadripartite commissions, which decide the if, when and how of voluntary repatriation schemes.

141 NRC (2017a).

5. Designing cross-border approaches

Patterns of displacement and return are often cyclical, characterised by secondary movement and recurrent exile, short-term returns, and split or phased returns. Any engagement to support returns, therefore, needs to take into account cross-border movements. **While refugees and returnees cross borders, (re)integration assistance has not followed mobility dynamics. Cross-border approaches can ensure that interventions are flexible and aligned with people's mobility, instead of being bound by state demarcation lines.**

Cross-border trends and dynamics can inform early solutions and country-level planning. In many borderlands, whether in the Horn of Africa or in Central Asia, movement is the result of seasonality, cultural and social practices, trade and commodity prices. Communities on both sides of the border trade and may use each other's services. In recent years, progress has been made in integrating such factors into programming in the Mandera Triangle in the Horn of Africa, across Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia. The EU-funded Building Opportunities for Resilience in the Horn of Africa (BORESHA) project, which is led by DRC, aims to promote economic development and the capacities of cross-border communities to identify their own priorities, and to plan and advocate for measures to support them. As this project in the Horn of Africa is new, it can be studied to inform programming in relation to returns in the Afghan and Somali contexts.

Consultations with stakeholders reveal that:

- **Approaches to cross-border programming on returns and (re)integration in Somalia and Kenya have been limited and have not attracted donor investment.** First, cross-border meetings planned by UNHCR under the tripartite agreement were held only irregularly due to institutional tussles over the location of the meetings (in Somalia or Kenya), setting the tone for wider dysfunction. Cross-border alignment and joint work was not helped by a widely reported misalignment of perspectives between UNHCR's country offices in Kenya and Somalia, not least regarding conditions in areas of return in Somalia.¹⁴² Finally, returns to Somalia were ramped up in 2016 against the backdrop of a severe drought, with most operational actors focused on addressing the acute food insecurity of over 2.9 million Somalis. Facilitating longer-term (re)integration in this context

was not an operational priority, as (re)integration was only later set on the agenda of policy-makers and practitioners.

- **Cross-border programming to support (re)integration has been a shortcoming in Afghanistan and has also received insufficient donor support.** When, in 2014, the European Union's Aid to Uprooted People (AUP) programme was launched in Afghanistan, it included a specific focus on cross-border interventions that had the potential to increase the sustainability of return and (re)integration outcomes, covering Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan.¹⁴³ This focus was expected to improve livelihood and (re)integration outcomes in Afghanistan, while also leading to new and independent thinking to support the sector. When the call was renewed after three years, the focus on cross-border programming had been lost due to implementation difficulties. In a 2015 meeting of regional NGOs in Tehran, representatives acknowledged that, although governments and donors were asking for cross-border programming, they had unrealistic expectations of what that would mean in practice. NGOs asked: *"In a region where access is limited, where governments do not authorise implementation or monitoring, when offices are not present in all three countries equally, can we effectively speak of cross-border programming?"*¹⁴⁴ In response, NGOs presented minimum standards for cross-border programming. These standards were not pursued as the AUP's cross-border funding had ended, but they should still be adopted to test the outcomes of cross-border approaches, namely by measuring operational efforts towards:
 - working with the same cohort of beneficiaries across borders
 - adapting infrastructure to ensure cross-border capacity
 - improving referral systems, coordination and communication among NGOs
 - ensuring the presence of legal services, certificates and family tracing mechanisms
 - conducting cross-border monitoring as a basis for programming
 - doing away with conditionality clauses
 - supporting cross-border initiatives through multi-year funding

Lessons learnt point to the need to set standards for what cross-border programming can achieve. Building

¹⁴² Key informant interviews, Nairobi, March 2019.

¹⁴³ EU (2014). Aid to uprooted people. Call for proposals 150514

¹⁴⁴ Samuel Hall (2015b). "Afghan Displaced Youth": A Regional NGO Meeting on Afghan Refugees, Returnees and Durable Solutions.

on such experiences, in 2011, ACTED and CARE released a set of principles for effective cross-border programming. With regard to return movements, these can entail the need for:¹⁴⁵

- Joint cross-border programming in which a programme is designed to support a specific cohort of refugees or returnees and is undertaken on both sides of the border. For example, livelihoods programming focused on skills relevant in countries of origin, livelihoods-matching schemes, and support for individuals with specific needs (often related to health).
- Coordinated or consistent cross-border interventions in which a programme is designed to support people on the return journey and to (re)integrate them on their return.

Box 5. Planning Cross-Border Activities from the Viewpoint of Returnees

WFP Somalia's operational support is an interesting model of what can be achieved when the process develops from the point of view of Somali returnees, rather than through an organisational lens. Recognising that support is more effective when it is consistent and coherent along the return journey, WFP Somalia deployed staff to its Kenya team in Dadaab to facilitate a joined-up approach. Although numerous challenges ensued, the more efficient and effective results offset the initial challenges. WFP staff demonstrated an ability to better plan and respond to return patterns of refugees, as well as to trace specific refugee needs along the journey. This included both the ability to address specific vulnerabilities, as well as to monitor the nutritional status of refugees before and after return. Strong leadership and a willingness within the Kenya and Somalia country teams to work collaboratively were key to the establishment of this arrangement.

In 2014, eight companies from Afghanistan went to Tehran to speak to refugee youth about the possibility of matching their skills to jobs in Afghanistan. The private sector and refugees were interested, but a conditionality clause blocked progress as youth were required to give up their amayesh (refugee) cards. Families were against the clause. NGOs also highlighted obstacles to cross-border programming, including conditionality clauses and the lack of political will to provide multi-year funding for the necessary infrastructure. Conditionality, in this case, is the requirement to forego one's refugee status as a prerequisite to job placement or educational opportunities. A practice for Afghan refugees in Iran and Somali refugees in Kenya, conditionality has led to the failure of cross-border schemes that do not provide the flexibility that refugees require. The issue of conditionality has been noted as particularly problematic from both a human rights and a (re)integration perspective.

In 2016, the Iranian government proposed a conditional programme for Afghan refugees to access university education in Iran should they be prepared to forego their refugee status, to return to Afghanistan to apply for a student visa and then travel back to Iran. Whilst informal interviews with Iran-born Afghan refugees at the Islam Qala border in Afghanistan in 2016 revealed that such plans were aligned with their aspirations, no formal monitoring of this scheme has been carried out to date.



Key Takeaways

1. Cross-border programming, aligned with mobility patterns, are a key component of (re)integration programming and for improvement in referral processes.
2. The lack of funding for cross-border initiatives has meant that programmes are limited to operating on two sides of a border, rather than planning across borders.
3. Cross-border programming can allow stakeholders to work with the same cohort, to provide consistent, coordinated programming that follows and monitors a group of people through their return journey to their (re)integration. This approach can enhance learning to benefit all (re)integration programmes through a longitudinal and multi-sited approach.

¹⁴⁵ These practices are echoed in the literature on vulnerable dryland communities. See ACTED and CARE (2011) Draft good practice principles for cross border programming in the drylands of the Horn of Africa

6. Planning local responses with a focus on housing, land and property rights

There are gaps in urban planning in contexts to which refugees return. Greater planning and support to local return responses are needed to avoid returnees living in informal settlements. Across all contexts, few urban plans have integrated the displaced or the informal settlements in which they live. Instead, much of the response has focused on forced evictions rather than on planning to mainstream urban spaces or upgrading informal settlements. In return settings, national-level actors and urban planners may have reservations about IDPs or returnees living in informal settlements because they can add complexity to both urban planning and the ethnic make-up of a certain area. This may lead to

inclusion–exclusion dynamics, which state and municipal actors must resolve. Yet, planning can only take place when urban systems are considered alongside possibilities for local integration.

Afghanistan’s last urban plan for Kabul was drawn up in 1979. In the 1990s, Taliban rule led to the destruction of large parts of the city. By the time refugees began to return, in 2002, after the US-led invasion, the capital and most other cities had seen no investment in basic infrastructure in at least a decade.¹⁴⁶ The main city was ill-prepared for the returns and could not manage the growth in its population. Kabul expanded from 500,000 to 5 million inhabitants, largely due to returns. A master city plan for Kabul is currently being developed and has frequently been cited as a constraint for the local integration of displaced populations. Somalia has among the world’s highest urbanisation rates,¹⁴⁷ while Afghanistan has the highest rate in its region, at 5% per year – double the regional average.¹⁴⁸ A large part of this urbanisation is due to newcomers: IDPs and returning



An ITS in Zahle, Lebanon, 2017. © Dara Al-Masri /DRC

146 ODI (2012). Kabul’s Hidden Crisis.

147 World Bank (2017b). Somali Authorities Make Urban Resilience a Priority.

148 World Bank (2017a). Leveraging the urbanization dividend in Afghanistan.

refugees, but also rural–urban migrants. Similar challenges are anticipated in Syria in the near future, particularly as peri-urban areas, where heavy fighting occurred, have been extensively damaged.

Some efforts to address this issue do exist. Public conversations around local integration enabled actors such as UN-Habitat in Afghanistan to move beyond a project-based approach, focusing on efforts to upgrade informal settlements in cities receiving returnees, to holding policy-level discussions on national-level changes required to facilitate local integration. This has led the Afghan government to repeal Presidential Decree 104 on land allocation and to institute Presidential Decree (PD) 305 in its place. The Afghan government's Displacement and Returnee Executive Committee (DiREC) worked with a technical working group to develop the legal framework for PD 305, so that land allocation would include improved access to livelihoods and essential services, streamlined beneficiary selection, improved transparency and accountability throughout the land allocation process, and the prioritisation of vulnerable groups.

In Kismayo, Somalia, on the other hand, the government has agreed to the creation of the Jubaland Land Authority, which is tasked with developing a city master plan covering old and new districts of Kismayo, adding a new district for returning refugees. The New Kismayo location, which plans to include schools and markets, may become an example of integrated services for returnees and hosts.

The centrality of housing, land and property in limiting further displacement

HLP assistance needs to be implemented to prevent land-related conflict and to support inclusion for returnees. Studies find that access to HLP is central both to refugees' decision-making about whether and when to return and to prospects for (re)integration.¹⁴⁹ This is evident in relation to spontaneous returns to Syria; despite conditions not being conducive to returns, housing, land and property issues have already taken centre stage. On the one hand, one-third of returnees (both refugees and IDPs) explained, in a recent report, that they had returned to check on their properties or to seek livelihoods.¹⁵⁰ On the other, 27% of housing stock is thought to have been fully or partially destroyed,¹⁵¹ and

there are signs that Syrian government reconstruction may focus on areas populated by those loyal to the government.¹⁵² Furthermore, there is a strong likelihood of competing claims over land and property rights in the context of the widespread loss and destruction of title deeds, displacement and the secondary occupation of properties.¹⁵³ The implication of this for the (re)integration of Syrian refugees is daunting.

Many returnees have spent years – even decades – in relatively cosmopolitan and urbanised environments in exile and have adapted their lifestyles accordingly. Expectations have also changed, with the lack of opportunities and services in villages of origin prompting many returnees to go to cities.¹⁵⁴ Insecurity in Somalia and Afghanistan renders large tracts of land inaccessible to returnees, which means they often arrive to relatively small urban enclaves of stability. This restrictive environment, combined with ongoing processes of urbanisation, results in high demand, limited availability and rapidly escalating land and property prices.¹⁵⁵ With limited resources and lacking the social (and often ethnic) connections to access limited housing stock, returnees face difficulties and discrimination. In Kismayo, a female returnee explains her struggles with precarious housing and access to shelter: *“One of the most challenging issues when I came back to Kismayo was the rent, because if you are in a rented house, the owner may ask you to leave at any point. And this can happen when you don't know the area very well. When you have children, it's an even bigger challenge, because owners don't like large families with many children; they might say that we will damage their house.”*

A significant number of those who return to new areas join the ranks of IDPs: in one estimate, seven out of ten Afghan returnees return to displacement.¹⁵⁶ In IDP camps, shelter is both temporary and inadequate; many returnees in Somalia are also at risk of forced evictions. **Replacing camp life in the country of asylum with camp life back home is a failure of (re)integration and durable solutions.**

The importance of HLP for (re)integration has prompted increased attention at policy and programme levels. In Somalia, this has resulted in government capacity in policy development being strengthened, support for the establishment of eviction monitoring units, increased training for key stakeholders in HLP

149 Harild, Christensen and Zetter (2015); NRC (2017b). Reflections on future challenges to Housing, Land and Property restitution for Syrian refugees.

150 Samuel Hall (2018).

151 World Bank (2017c). The Toll of War: The Economic and Social Consequences of the Conflict in Syria

152 Batrawi (2018). Drivers of urban reconstruction in Syria: power, privilege and profit extraction.

153 NRC (2017b).

154 World Bank/UNHCR (2019)

155 For instance, according to NGOs in Kismayo, the price of a building plot in areas where returnees are being located has risen from US\$200 to US\$600 in the past two years.

156 NRC/Samuel Hall (2018). Returning to what? The challenges displaced Afghans face in securing durable solutions.

issues, legal and information support to displaced persons and the integration of shelter support into wider durable solutions programming. However, despite the centrality of HLP to sustainable (re)integration, chronic and critical shortcomings remain in terms of support to returnees.¹⁵⁷

6.1 Rental subsidies: learning from Somalia

The case study below describes an example of a pilot housing response used in Mogadishu, where land allocation is notoriously problematic. Costs are high and supply is limited, illustrating the complexity of moving from humanitarian shelter approaches towards a housing approach adapted to urban contexts.

Box 6. Rental Subsidies in Mogadishu

A pilot project by NRC and UN-Habitat tackles the challenges of access to housing and forced evictions by improving rental security. A rental approach was viewed as more relevant to Mogadishu, based on feedback from project participants that the proposed public land for allocation was too far from the city centre. The project aims to ensure that enhanced livelihoods generate enough income for beneficiaries to pay their rent on their own. The livelihoods support includes a cash stipend to cover basic needs for seven months, and either vocational skills training for four months or a grant to start a small or medium-sized business.

Beneficiaries must find suitable rental accommodation; NRC then raises landlords' awareness of HLP rights. This has been mostly positively received by landlords, albeit with concerns about what might happen once the support provided has ended. As one landlord in Mogadishu explained: "A year is a short time in which to transform your life."

While the project remains a pilot, early results suggest it has successfully helped participants meet their rental requirements to date, but more efficient processes are required to address the housing needs of 80 households.

Lessons learnt here include the following:

- A pilot is critical for complex HLP projects so that they benefit from lessons learnt.
- A strong participatory component ensured that adaptations to programming were reflective of participant feedback.
- A strong project team is required, with the skills to engage persuasively with multiple stakeholders.
- The project must consider participants' need to settle debts before they relocate. In the pilot, cash grants had to be issued early on so that participants could settle debts without involving gatekeepers who might then have some hold over them.
- In future, the project should plan for utility bills, which were not incorporated into the pilot project.
- Participants indicated a strong preference for properties close to their previous residences so they could continue to tap into social networks.
- No beneficiaries took up the offer of long-term vocational skills training, as families needed the cash injection and could ill afford to commit four months to training. Allocating the grant in two tranches was effective in identifying households able to sustain livelihoods.
- In future, targeting may be based on capacity to sustain livelihoods rather than vulnerability.



Key Takeaways

1. There are gaps in urban planning in contexts of return. Greater planning and support to local return responses are needed. Few urban plans integrate the displaced or the informal settlements in which they live.
2. Public conversations around (re)integration have allowed stakeholders to move beyond the project-based upgrading of settlements to policy-level changes on land allocation.
3. HLP assistance is central to preventing conflict and supporting returnee inclusion. Rental subsidies can be better adapted to urban areas, in certain cases, than land allocation, as piloted in Mogadishu.

¹⁵⁷ Harild, Christensen and Zetter (2015).



Longer-term support for sustainable (re)integration

This final lessons learnt chapter concludes the response to the question “*How can returnees, receiving communities, governments and organisations be more effectively prepared so as to lay the ground and work towards sustainable (re)integration?*” by reflecting on the long-term support required. As national governments are in the lead, it is essential to the promotion of durable solutions that national planning across all sectors be inclusive of returnees and displacement-affected communities.

While recognising that returns happen increasingly to urban areas that are not areas of origin, that women and youth face specific problems in these locations, our focus in this final chapter turns to:

- Locally led urban and community plans for (re)integration. We highlight the role of urban planning and communities in determining priorities for sustainable (re)integration.
- Locally led approaches to economic (re)integration. While sustainable (re)integration is multidimensional, programming has zoomed in on specific strands of economic support. In a recent review of durable

solutions in Somalia, we found that all ongoing durable solutions initiatives target the economic needs of returnees, with an over-reliance by humanitarian actors on technical and vocational education and training (TVET).

- As the focus has predominantly been on economic (re)integration, social and psychosocial dimensions, as well as key legal dimensions, have been sidelined. Closing monitoring and data gaps after return will not only ensure that refugees are not returned to situations of harm, but will also ensure that such gaps in programming are addressed.
- Zoom in on the nexus between humanitarian action, development and peacebuilding to ensure the interrelationships between the three areas inform (re)integration programming.

Throughout this section, we present what works and what can work, based on selected lessons learnt, to inform the longer-term need for supporting sustainable (re)integration.



Local market in Gardo, Puntland, Somalia, 2014. © Axel Fassio/DRC

7. Prioritising urban and community plans

Community-based programming has long been a focus of resilience and development planning, but rarely of (re)integration programming, and even more rarely in urban areas. This gap is now being addressed through community development councils (CDCs) in Afghanistan and community action plans (CAPs) in Somalia that now integrate durable solutions planning. The CDCs and CAPs have a long-term developmental focus, which includes but is not limited to ensuring durable solutions. Community action plans usually do not exclusively deal with durable solutions for returnees, but with development planning (and addressing root causes) for the whole community.

Part of the difficulty, as noted by stakeholders interviewed for this study, was to convince urban planners to come on board the durable solutions debate, and to identify community relays to speak on behalf of displacement-affected communities. Recent initiatives, in Somalia and Afghanistan, address these aspects of community engagement – inclusive of refugees, returnees, IDPs and host communities – as being critical to (re)integration analysis and programming.

The principles were first formulated in 2016/2017 by ReDSS with its partners. They were revised with NGOs and UN agencies in 2018, coordinated by ReDSS and the Somalia UN Resident Coordinator Office, and eventually endorsed by the Federal Government of Somalia early 2019 (see Box 7).

In the decade from 2003 to 2013, the World Bank allocated more than US\$85 billion for local participatory development work globally.¹⁵⁸ The National Solidarity Program (NSP) adopted this approach in Afghanistan

under a US\$2.5 billion programme, which was not only Afghanistan's largest development project, but was also considered its most successful.¹⁵⁹ A central feature was the establishment of community development councils through which the NSP was implemented. The Citizens' Charter, part of Afghanistan's 2016–2026 Peace and Development Framework, builds on these participatory approaches by serving as the entry point to communities for the delivery of education, health, infrastructure and livelihood activities. The approach has been extended to urban areas – the first time that urban and rural development have come together under one pillar, in part to support sustainable (re)integration.¹⁶⁰

In 2016, the Wajadir Framework for Somalia was launched – the country's first national framework for local governance, reconciliation and civic dialogue. A range of actors support its implementation, including through a US\$145 million UN project led by UNDP.¹⁶¹ In Somalia's fractured and fragile security and governance environment, this is a long-term endeavour. In the meantime, durable solutions actors are instigating community engagement approaches called community action plans (see Box 8). A second approach has been to use quota-based systems to ensure that returnees, IDPs and host communities benefit from assistance. This approach is applied particularly when allotting shelter under land allocation schemes in Somalia. Through a community approach, returnees, IDPs and vulnerable hosts are allocated plots of land and shelter, giving rise to new communities composed of diverse groups who share new spaces.

How to ensure that political decision-making listens and responds to the perspectives of diverse groups

An element of greater community engagement and consultation is ensuring that political decision-making listens and responds to the perspectives of diverse groups. An inclusive process is needed to encourage dialogue, mutual understanding and solidarity within diverse (and possibly divided) communities, but also with decision-makers. In the context of widespread need, such as in Somalia, experts admit the emphasis has been on responding to people's needs, with less engagement with social and political dimensions that can foster sustainable (re)integration.¹⁶²

Initiatives are underway to strengthen the voices and inclusion of displacement-affected communities, and to make those voices heard by decision-makers. These

Box 7. Durable Solutions Core Programming Principles*

- government-led
- area-based
- collective and comprehensive
- participatory and community-based
- rights- and needs-based
- sensitive to gender, age, disabilities and marginalisation
- sustainable

* United Nations Somalia and ReDSS Core Programming Principles.

158 Mansuri and Rao (2013). Localizing Development: Does Participation Work?

159 Katz (2017). Community-Based Development in Rural Afghanistan: First, Assume a Community.

160 World Bank (2016). Afghanistan Government Inaugurates Citizens' Charter to Target Reform and Accountability.

161 UN Joint Programme on Local Governance and Decentralized Service Delivery in Somalia 2008–2016.

162 Key informant interview with UN official, Mogadishu, March 2019.

Box 8. Community Action Plans as a Means of Strengthening Accountability in Somaliaⁱ

Somali returnees return to fragile cities fractured by protracted crises and displacement, prolonged insecurity and weak governance. Many returnees are from low-status clans or live as guests in their new cities of residence,ⁱⁱ where they must overcome endemic discrimination and exclusion to make a living.

An approach that has been adopted in durable solutions programming in Somalia is the use of community action plans (CAPs). A cross-section of residents – including returnees, IDPs and members of the host community – conduct inclusive, participatory, area-based community planning to jointly identify barriers to durable solutions within their communities. The outcome is a set of inter-community priorities articulated in a CAP that directs government and aid agency support.

In Kismayo, IOM and UN-Habitat have conducted CAPs for their Midnimo (unity) project. With the overall objective of strengthening social cohesion, the project aims to boost community participation and accountability between municipal authorities and residents. The project has achieved this by forming core facilitation teams of representatives from the community and government, which lead consultations. The priorities identified as a result of the consultations are captured in a book. First cross-referenced with the communities involved, the CAP is then launched publicly to promote its use as a framework for engagement and assistance by a wider set of actors.

Another benefit of CAPs is the fact that these are not strictly humanitarian projects. The result is priorities different to those that might usually be requested of humanitarian organisations. For example, a number of communities prioritised the building of police stations and rubbish collection through CAPs. Finally, the engagement of government officials represents a step change. Officials note that this approach has resulted in greater leadership and advocacy for the resulting priorities.

One test for CAPs will be the ability of local government to fully participate in the process and align government reconstruction and development planning to those plans. Government funding will also need to be allocated to community priorities. Monitoring when and where this happens can improve the learning process around CAPs.

Without strong efforts to link with local governance, district budgeting processes and sustainable financing, all of which require institutionalisation, these project-specific CAPs may occur in parallel – and may ultimately undermine – emerging governance efforts. These weaknesses are well recognised and are being addressed in a successor project, which aims to strengthen coherence across the different CAPs and create a linkage with local governance efforts.ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱ This box draws on findings from the ReDSS/Samuel Hall/SDRI (2019) Somalia Solutions Analysis Update 2019.

ⁱⁱ DDG (2017). Dadaab Returnee Conflict Assessment.

ⁱⁱⁱ Danwadaag project, Somalia.

include, for example, the establishment of a common social accountability process in Somalia to engage at scale with communities through a digital and qualitative platform that captures citizens' perspectives on a range of issues that are not defined by a single project, mandate or sector.¹⁶³ Evidence highlights Somali citizens' sense of disconnect from decision-making processes. In Mogadishu, 40% of Somalis living in settlements say they lack access to decision-making, while a third raise concerns that an alarming 96% of those receiving aid believe they are under-consulted.¹⁶⁴ These are sobering statistics for national and international actors striving for sustainable (re)integration. These issues are likely to be exacerbated for returnees, many of whom have spent decades – if not their entire lives – abroad.

What is social accountability?

Social accountability is understood as the holding to account of decision-makers outside of political accountability (i.e. elections and political parties).

It involves amplifying the voice of citizens to the level of decision-making in order to improve the performance of institutions constituted to serve them and, more broadly, to enhance trust in institutions.

Fox, J (2014). Social Accountability: What does the evidence really say? GPSA Working Paper No. 1. Washington: World Bank.

How to ensure adequate representation of different groups

Whilst the essence of (re)integration and durable solutions approaches is to redress vulnerabilities and inequities associated with displacement, a key

163 See: <https://www.africasvoices.org/>

164 ReDSS/Africa's Voices (2019).

principle is to go beyond status-based approaches to a displacement-affected community approach. In some ways, these two aspects of durable solutions are contrary to one another, and there are clear risks of applying a status-based approach. An example is the way that agencies target services to returnees via quota systems (often, 50% returnees, 30% IDPs and 20% host communities). Returnees may be targeted on the basis of prior displacement, such as preventing renewed or secondary displacement. They have specific needs for shelter, livelihoods and education related to displacement, along with potentially longer-term social, cultural and communication needs due to weak or absent networks. However, research shows the risks of categorising people based on their migration status, including marking them out for discrimination as outsiders who do not qualify for a range of rights, and thereby limiting social inclusion and cohesion prospects.¹⁶⁵ Focus group participants in Somalia spoke of children facing discrimination in school and being identified as Yemeni or Kenyan, depending on where they had returned from, pushing returnees to

want to blend in rather than stand out based on their migration status. A woman in Mogadishu also spoke about being identified or labelled a returnee: *"I feel the word returnee has become part of my name now. It is identified in where we live; we are referred to as returnees by the government, organisations and places that have been built for us. We left a country that did not belong to us, where everyone referred to us as refugees, and now we are back in our country and we still have a label."* Supporting this transition should be a focus of programming.

7.1 Land allocation and integrated settlement planning

With pressure mounting on available land and returnees often facing displacement on return, shortcomings in integrated settlement planning have become constraints to (re)integration. A Kismayo returnee, interviewed in Medina village, explains the concerns that he and his neighbours share: *"We were like tractors*



Reception Centre in Berbera, Somaliland, Somalia, 2015. © Axel Fassio/DRC

165 DDG (2017). Dadaab returnee conflict assessment; Sturridge, Bakewell and Hammond (2018).

unloading sand; we were brought here but not given care. No one has looked [at] us again. We don't have water, good education and health." An older man said, jokingly, "Would you call a one bedroom a house? Would you accept to live in one bedroom if you are six people in your household, when you are young and need your privacy?"

While access to land and housing is one of the priority needs of returnees, governments have often assumed that any land would do. Land for the displaced is commonly located on the margins of urban life and service delivery, and in areas not previously conceived as suitable and habitable places. Medina was described to our teams as an area between a graveyard and a rubbish dump.

The risk of encampment upon return occurred in Afghanistan following large-scale repatriation after the fall of the Taliban. In 2005, the Land Allocation Scheme, under Presidential Decree 104, provided landless returnees with land from 300,000 plots at over 30 sites in Afghanistan. However, despite the engagement of key stakeholders – the government, UN, donors and NGOs – many of the sites remained ghost towns, which were either under-inhabited or uninhabited as the intended residents migrated abroad or moved to urban centres due to inadequate access to basic services and livelihoods.¹⁶⁶ One of the community leaders interviewed in Alice Ghan, just 60 kilometres north of Kabul, explained that the government had been unable to negotiate water access with the neighbouring community, resulting in an unaffordable and unsustainable water trucking outcome for returnees. Nor had the government been able to agree on including these townships in national development and rural development plans early on, compromising on any possibility of turning these schemes into areas with growth prospects. Disagreements between stakeholders meant that Alice Ghan, a land allocation site funded by the Government of Australia, with support from the UN, soon became home to those who could not afford to leave. The same community leader explained that, as there was no clinic nearby, his wife had passed away before she could reach a hospital. The most destitute were left to live there.

New legal frameworks for state land allocation for returnees

Afghanistan's new Presidential Decree on Land Allocation (PD-305) was issued in 2018 and is set to be implemented in 2019, in recognition of historical shortcomings in the treatment of returnees and of the

fact that land is a critical component of durable solutions for the displaced. The main aim of the decree is to make best use of land for economic and social purposes, envisioning land allocation, services and shelter as a collective, prioritising vulnerable groups and, thereby, addressing shortcomings of the past. Discussions with Citizens' Charter stakeholders have revealed gaps in knowledge about the new allocation system, with a need for more awareness-raising to accompany the change.

As the case study below illustrates (Box 9), **whilst the provision of land or shelter is part of the solution, this, in itself, does not ensure durable solutions or sustainable (re)integration.** Strong, economically active and well-serviced communities require a longer-term, integrated approach to livelihoods, basic services and housing – not simply land or shelter.

Greater success requires strong coordination across sectors and actors in order to deliver services and support to a community. **Even with a multisectoral response, many services are being provided by international humanitarian organisations rather than being delivered in partnership with civil society organisations or the private sector.** This runs counter to the aim of (re)integration: that returnees should be integrated not only into their societies, but also into the systems that support them, rather than receiving parallel services that are outside of a city's existing services and market systems. The fundamental issue remains that, in some return locations, services are non-existent. The lack of government-led services is being addressed as part of the state-building agenda in Somalia. **The durable solutions and state-building agendas are interlinked:** to ensure that settlements are not set up as villages in parallel but are, instead, integrated into national systems – even if these are nascent. This will also require regulating engagement with private sector actors that can, in the meantime, provide access to services such as electricity and water. From a sustainability and affordability perspective, exploring the public–private partnership option should be a systematic endeavour of area-based planning.

Agreement on an integrated approach under one settlement plan is required to turn land-based solutions into stepping stones for durable solutions. Kismayo illustrates the need to go beyond single settlement plans to larger-scale, citywide urban plans under which new and existing settlements are configured, planned and connected as city extensions, rather than as separate, disconnected villages.

166 Majidi (2013). Home sweet home! Repatriation, reintegration and land allocation in Afghanistan.

Box 9. Land Allocation and Integrated Settlement Planning in Kismayo, Somalia

Kismayo is Somalia's third-largest city and the capital of the Lower Juba region and Jubaland state. Its already large population has increased due to the presence of IDPs and returnees. Many residents live in one-room shelters, where they endure inadequate, unsanitary and cramped living conditions, fire hazards and limited security of tenure.ⁱ A raft of measures – including emergency and transitional shelter initiatives – were implemented in response to this housing crisis.ⁱⁱ However, with IDPs continuing to arrive following a severe drought in 2016, as well as large numbers of returnees, a more sustainable response was needed.

In 2016, in response to advocacy by international agencies and other actors, the Jubaland government allocated land for IDPs and returnees in underdeveloped areas on the outskirts of Kismayo. About 700 permanent one-bedroom brick and concrete houses were built in Afmadow and Medina. Although the housing offered greater security of tenure, the lack of a comprehensive settlement plan quickly became evident. Built on sand, the area is vulnerable to flooding, and the properties soon developed structural faults. People were relocated with insufficient consideration being given to services and livelihoods. Although the site is just 3 kilometres from Kismayo, residents complain that poor access to the city and its main markets undermine livelihoods opportunities.

A second site, Midnimo village, adopted a more integrated and comprehensive approach. NRC developed a settlement plan against which a range of agencies, including the German Development Agency (GIZ), ARC, CARE and UNHCR, established a market, health services, water points and schools. One- and two-bedroom permanent houses came later. The schools and the clinic opened a year into the programme. Many homes have an energy supply, although access to electricity and water needs to be made more affordable and cost-effective for the displaced.

Essential to the approach has been an integrated multisector and multi-actor response, so people moved into a settlement with functional services rather than an empty site. This requires time and cannot be achieved under short-term humanitarian deadlines and funding. Humanitarian agencies point to the need to incorporate support for HLP rights into the plan, while, at the same time, ensuring a government capacity-strengthening component so that government counterparts provide strategic and operational leadership for complex issues.

In 2017, concerned in part that returnees were swapping life in a camp in Kenya for life in a camp in Kismayo, the Jubaland government announced a new shelter policy, stipulating a two-room structure as the minimum. There are signs that this policy, which increases the appropriateness and sustainability of housing, may be adopted across Somalia. However, aid actors are resisting. They insist on striking a balance between providing two-room houses for just a few and addressing the pressing need for shelter for the tens of thousands of IDPs in Kismayo. They argue that the two-room houses, which cost approximately US\$4,500 each, are unaffordable. As an estimated 20,000 households in Kismayo need shelter and based on current housing requirements alone (not including infrastructure, services and the potential increase in returnees from Kenya), the total cost would be an unaffordable US\$90 million. Whether interim solutions – such as building foundations for larger houses and owner-driven responses – could form part of the answer is still being debated. However, experience shows that providing shelter addresses only part of the issue; housing must be part of a comprehensive, integrated plan that addresses livelihoods, basic services, infrastructure and social cohesion.

i UN-Habitat (2017). Kismayo Urban Profile: Working Paper and Spatial Analyses for Urban Planning Consultations and Durable Solutions for Displacement Crises

ii Shelter Cluster Somalia (2016). Shelter and Refugee Returnees.



Key Takeaways

1. The adoption of common programming principles – a key feature of resilience and development planning – can ensure commitment to processes, such as community-based programming, that support durable solutions.
2. Initiatives are underway to strengthen the voices and inclusion of displacement-affected communities, and to make those voices heard by decision-makers. These include, for example, the establishment of a common social accountability platform in Somalia.
3. Integrated approaches under a 'one settlement plan' are required to turn land-based solutions into stepping stones for durable solutions, focusing on housing, rather than shelter, and on configured, planned and connected city extensions.

8. Investing in locally led approaches to economic (re)integration

Economic (re)integration programming has focused disproportionately on technical and vocational education and training (TVET). In return settings, TVET is often considered a cornerstone in rebuilding livelihoods and a necessary step towards socioeconomic (re)integration. While a link to the educational system is clear, links to market systems have, more often than not, been overlooked. To ensure that TVET is more than a skills-building activity and that it generates social and economic impacts for returnee households, the approach needs to be rethought in (re)integration programming. Some analysts interviewed for this research pushed this rationale further, stating that TVET by humanitarian actors should be stopped, leaving specialists – in this case, development actors – in charge of the portfolio around skills and jobs.

Clarifying TVET programming's objective: a re-focus on integration

Technical and vocational education and training programmes in return settings have maintained a dual objective, one of which is to support economic (re)integration and improve access to income, while the other is to reduce irregular migration. Evidence from Afghanistan and Somalia challenge these perspectives and clarify, as a way forward, the need to delink the TVET agenda from a migration-management agenda. While TVET projects within (re)integration programmes in Afghanistan and Somalia often focus on reducing migration, evidence finds no direct link between TVET and migration decision-making. A policy brief based on six datasets of 12,000 survey responses¹⁶⁷ reveals that employee and education programmes have mixed impacts on migration decision-making. Therefore, TVET alone does not anchor returnees in their country of origin; decisions are based on structural factors of peace and hopes for a secure future, as well as actual access to labour markets.



Returnees wait to cross the border at Torkham crossing. © NRC/Enayatullah Azad

167 Mercy Corps/Samuel Hall (2018). Driven to Leave: Aid & Migration – Assessing Evidence from Somalia & Afghanistan.



Newly arrived women from Yemen resting at the reception center in Berbera, Somaliland, 2015. © Axel Fassio/DRC

If the ultimate goal is to improve access to income and, through income, to improve people's lives and capacity to access health, education and other services, then TVET activities need to be part of a holistic approach. In Afghanistan and in Somalia, TVET programmes are delinked from the other variables that can, when combined, result in greater well-being. For instance, the link between TVET and socioeconomic inclusion requires greater attention. In both contexts, there is a strong correlation between available social capital¹⁶⁸ and access to opportunities upon return. Returnees – particularly youth – point to the need for connections to get placements. However, finding work also depends on what you know. Knowledge does not simply develop upon return; building knowledge must be part of education systems in exile. The examples from our primary data are telling: in Somalia, returnees from Kenya found it easier than those from Yemen to secure jobs if they are more educated, but returnees from Yemen were perceived as having marketable skills. This supports arguments laid out earlier for investing in refugees while they are in their country of asylum in order to enhance (re)integration. **An overview of previous and existing interventions finds that programming focuses neither on the potential of social networks to sustain livelihoods nor on ways of enhancing TVET in exile.**

Bringing coherence and building structures for TVET

Key to sustainability is the need to invest in locally led approaches to economic (re)integration rather than exogenous training provided by humanitarian aid organisations. The mayor of Baidoa, in Somalia, has said his city has enough tailors, beauty practitioners and mechanics, and that he would not agree to any more training programmes in these occupations.¹⁶⁹ Similar frustrations have been voiced in Afghanistan, where the absence of strategic coordination on education and skills programming for returnees among line ministries has hindered stakeholders' ability to manage expectations and outcomes.

Donors fund a range of non-specialised organisations to provide TVET without a working group, coordination structure, alignment or commonly accepted standard. A stakeholder in Kabul says, *"Each NGO is doing things separately, going their own way. This does not contribute to sustainability."*¹⁷⁰ The same lack of coordination is seen in the public sector. A key informant mentioned the lack of government-led TVET opportunities outside of the main urban areas, where the technical universities are usually based, as a key shortcoming that needs to be addressed. The concentration of education resources – both public and private – in urban areas requires greater

168 The networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively.

169 Mayor Watiin of Baidoa (2018) DFID Somalia Urban Conference, Jacaranda Hotel, Nairobi, Kenya.

170 Key informant interview, NRC, education specialist, Kabul (March 2019).

public attention, yet this may not be feasible due to funding and security issues.

A first step for ensuring coherence and avoiding duplication or market mismatches is to build structures for TVET policies and coordination. In Afghanistan, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) does not have a regulatory body for TVET. An ongoing objective of GIZ is to work with MoLSA to establish a body that can regulate such programmes under the umbrella of non-formal training. Steps are also being taken to build government-approved technical universities rather than adopting centre-based approaches. The example of Kismayo, in Somalia, sheds

light on recent processes endorsed by local authorities: a university structure is being developed to train trainers, who will gain government-approved and certified skills for further training.

A second step is to give meaning to private sector engagement. A question being raised across Somalia and Afghanistan, as well as in Jordan and Lebanon, is “*who is the private sector?*” Accurate data on the composition and practices of the private sector, including the informal sector, would provide clarity. In order to integrate refugees in larger numbers, evidence is needed to indicate how, when and where the private

Box 10. What Have We Learnt from TVET Programming in Afghanistan?

TVET programmes in Kabul and across Afghanistan have aimed to increase livelihoods opportunities and improve access to sustainable income for vulnerable populations. Yet, global experience shows that TVET programmes alone do not increase sustainable livelihoods. A World Bank economist's global evidence review concluded that “On the labour supply side, the most promising interventions appear to be ones that help workers access different labour markets, overcoming sectoral and, especially, spatial mismatches.” On the demand side, the most successful alternative policies and programs help firms overcome regulatory obstacles (innovation, doing business, hiring). By contrast, the least successful interventions have focused on job-training, skills development, and large-scale employment schemes.”ⁱ Key informants say TVET programmes struggle to place beneficiaries – often returnees, IDPs and vulnerable host community members – in stable employment or sustainable start-up businesses where they can earn an income.

ⁱ McKenzie (2017). *How Effective Are Active Labor Market Policies in Developing Countries? A Critical Review of Recent Evidence*.

ⁱⁱ Mercy Corps/Samuel Hall (2018); McKenzie (2017); Ghiasy, Zhou and Hallgren (2015). *Afghanistan's private sector: Status and ways forward*; World Bank (2008). *Skills Development in Afghanistan*.

TVET programmes alone: skills without jobs?

Traditional, stand-alone TVET programmes struggle to achieve their stated aim of finding stable employment and income streams for beneficiaries. The informal sector constitutes 80 to 90% of the Afghan economy, while formal employment accounts for just 9%.ⁱ In interviews, organisations that implement TVET described the ongoing struggle for their trainees to transition into jobs. Returnees, IDPs and vulnerable host community members have often experienced interrupted or incomplete schooling, and practitioners say target populations often lack basic literacy and numeracy skills, which are essential for technical training.ⁱⁱ

LMAs are integral in identifying skills for TVET and livelihoods programmes – and, therefore, employment after the course. A rigorous LMA identifies knowledge and skills that are a good match for the local labour market and, therefore, for TVET. Organisations implementing TVET say that, even if they are members of consortia, their resources are too limited to afford a comprehensive LMA.ⁱⁱⁱ Each implementer may hire consultants, but without a standardised, larger-scale LMA methodology at the provincial and national level, a smaller, programme-linked LMA is not as comprehensive as that required by TVET organisations. A larger-scale LMA, with economist inputs, may necessitate a wider sharing of resources across TVET providers, or the involvement of international governance actors such as the World Bank, UNDP, IOM and UNHCR.^{iv}

LMAs may use participatory methodologies that draw on the perspectives of beneficiaries, community leaders and community members, but those perspectives may not reflect market realities. A recurring issue with LMAs relates to skills identification; for example, a majority of participatory responses may identify a particular skill that may not correspond to actual opportunities. An NGO informant comments that, “The quality of research has been poor. There has been an issue with participatory research; consultants are talking to beneficiaries or potential beneficiaries, which is fine, but they are not necessarily clued into what the demand for skills is. What we need is actual economists to look at the labour market assessments. Otherwise, [the reply] you will always get back [is] ‘tailoring’” (in reference to common responses from research participants on well-known occupations).

ⁱ Ghiasy, Zhou and Hallgren (2015); World Bank (2008).

ⁱⁱ Key informant interviews with NRC and DRC (March 2019).

ⁱⁱⁱ Key informant interview with DRC (March 2019).

^{iv} ADSP (2018).

Coordination and synergies with government

The Afghan government and MoLSA detail their skills priorities in yearly plans, but these can be unclear or mismatched to project design. It is important to balance locally contextualised skills identification with comprehensive, rigorous market assessments that link to national priority programmes. Without such information, TVET programming cannot achieve its aims. Yet, regulatory and planning frameworks are missing in many return settings. Stronger synergies and enhanced coordination with government are essential to link TVET with livelihoods. Afghanistan's National TVET Strategy was intended to provide a road map for coordination across the TVET sector.ⁱ Still, the TVET landscape remains fragmented: at least four line ministries conduct work in TVET, livelihoods or skills education and training, including MoLSA, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Economy, the TVET Authority and the Deputy Ministry of Youth within the Ministry of Information and Culture.

In 2019, the World Bank and the Afghan government together launched the EZ-KAR project with five components to support 13 cities across five years. The project aims to develop market-enabling activities and interventions that are both community-driven and supporting city-level involvement. It builds on existing structures and national programmes, such as the Citizens' Charter's focus on community development councils, and the Cities Investment Program, which aims to improve the sustainability of cities in Afghanistan. EZ-KAR's focus on jobs and markets adds to these programmes. Grants will be provided for public works in 13 cities, focusing on provincial capital cities with the highest number of returnees and IDPs. Municipalities will identify a list of market projects and market-enabling activities, with approval being conditional on meeting regulatory reform actions, such as simplifying business regulations. The project will focus on national-level regulatory reform. While the project is only in its inception phase, it provides a development-focused economic (re) integration agenda that other agencies, including NGOs, will be able to contribute to.

i UNESCO (2013). Afghanistan National TVET Strategy.

sector can support returnees. Research finds that, in both Afghanistan and Somalia, small and medium-sized enterprises are often set up by returnees or members of the diaspora, who understand the potential of returnees to contribute. Linking the two through public–private partnerships at the national and local levels is a lesson learnt across contexts.

Investing in social and community-level livelihoods and market systems

Any livelihoods approach in return settings involves working around constraints for children, youth and women – rather than focusing primarily on men's livelihoods.

Save the Children in Afghanistan, as co-lead of the Education in Emergencies Working Group, provides support to families for sustainable employment, notably through small businesses. The goal is to help derail some child labour practices in return settings. However, research shows that such practices are generational and rooted in social customs. Undoing them will require both specific interventions on income and broader support to returnee households through education and raising awareness about harmful child labour practices, such as working at brick kilns or weaving carpets.

Each context also presents both opportunities and social constraints concerning women's business activity and employment, including travel. Perceptions of women-run businesses is an issue in Afghanistan but not in Somalia, for instance. In all settings, the

displaced are eager to ensure more favourable dependency ratios: if a woman has paid work, she adds to her household's income. Home-based activities and self-help groups¹⁷¹ are avenues for planning gender-sensitive livelihoods; another is to develop the market for women by upgrading the marketplace, improving safety to and in workplaces or schools, and linking women to value chains. Achieving these aims requires close collaboration with local governance structures, including municipalities, to help women feel empowered to work. Yet, rarely do women's economic empowerment programmes, established by humanitarian organisations, address the social and political aspects of women's marginalisation and lack of ability – as well as opportunity – to fully participate. One step would be to work with men, and other gatekeepers, to ensure that harmful norms and constraining practices are not entrenched through segregation in markets and workplaces.

Each context requires coordinated labour market assessments (LMAs) and partnerships with local stakeholders. Humanitarian organisations on the ground often do not have a partnership strategy for engaging with partners, whether civil society, the private sector or government. Understanding how to engage better and more strategically around livelihoods practices, including social and community-level norms, is a prerequisite. Building in conflict-sensitive analyses, analysis of social inclusion and economic inclusion, together can enable a broader understanding of labour markets as systems. The approach taken by ILO and UNHCR at a global

171 Schmeding (2018). The Self-Help Group Approach in Afghanistan: Report Prepared for People in Need.



The children of Shakrullah (26, not pictured) settled in Nangarhar, after continuing harassment and uncertain legal status forced them to leave their homes in a camp for Afghan refugees near Peshawar in Pakistan. © A Quilty / IRC

level in refugee-hosting and forced-displacement settings can be extended to the (re)integration context. The Approach to Inclusive Market Systems (AIMS)¹⁷² takes into account the functioning of the markets: from the business relationships and financial networks, to the supporting functions, rules and norms that govern markets and value chains. Any approach to integration requires a three-way social, economic and conflict-sensitive analysis, paired with market system analysis, to understand which sectors have the most potential for growth and for impact on the returnee and displacement-affected populations. Essential to such assessments are a strong understanding of returnee–host relationships, of governance structures and of private sector make-up.

A complementary option is to conduct joint and coordinated LMAs; however, agencies implement their own assessments based on differing methodologies and use the data to inform individual programmes.

Agencies need to avoid making the mistake of seeking singular solutions to livelihood interventions. NGOs complain that LMAs are often of poor quality and not conducted by researchers with a strong grounding in both macroeconomics and microeconomics, including business expertise. Working with market and context experts, development actors and the government is essential. Involving practitioners can ensure that programmes are then adapted. LMAs are critically important in identifying the skills required and in increasing the chances of employment and income following training.

Finally, **linking TVET and livelihoods to market systems is necessary, including to market systems outside of urban areas.** Opportunities may exist for returnees to use networks and their knowledge of rural and border areas to enhance the availability of food and jobs upon return. An analysis of durable solutions programming in Somalia reached similar conclusions.¹⁷³



Key Takeaways

1. Coordination and regulation of TVET activities have been weak across return contexts. TVET training must be delinked from a migration-management agenda and built into a national agenda.
2. Better linkages of TVET activities with employers, private sector actors, the wider market as well as social networks are needed for (re)integration to be possible.
3. Actors with expertise in economics, such as ILO and the World Bank, have a role to play in producing LMAs that are of sufficient technical rigour and scale to guide market-based interventions that do not just focus on areas, but on connections between rural and urban areas.

172 ILO (n.d.). Approach to Inclusive Market Systems (AIMS); see: <https://www.ilo.org/empent/Projects/refugee-livelihoods/lang--en/index.htm#AIMS>

173 ReDSS/Samuel Hall/SDRI (2019).

9. Closing monitoring and data gaps after return

9.1 Improving accountability for (re)integration through learning

In the view of a UN official, greater engagement on accountability does not happen in Somalia due to a lack of clear understanding among aid actors of the quality and impact of their programmes. This is particularly relevant in relation to returnees, whose specific needs and vulnerabilities post-return, in the context of a predominant focus on repatriation, usually remain unknown. Stakeholder monitoring and evaluations that do occur – with UNHCR and WFP, for instance – are rarely shared publicly. Beyond these evaluations on the part of these two actors, no agency or actor has performed a systematic analysis of returnees' progress towards (re)integration, including determinants and barriers they face over the short and longer term.¹⁷⁴ The common perception that returnees who receive a return package are privileged is not grounded in any assessment. There is no understanding of the relative well-being of those who have received return packages through voluntary repatriation schemes and those who return independently. Nor is there a comprehensive understanding of the scale of secondary movement, or how returnees returning to their places of origin are faring. There are perfunctory efforts to understand the vulnerabilities of different groups within a community and the implications for durable solutions. Amplifying community voices can be an important way of better understanding their needs and vulnerabilities. Without such understanding, returnees' needs and vulnerabilities cannot be said to define assistance frameworks for sustainable (re)integration, thereby limiting prospects for accountability.

Another approach – which is ongoing in Somalia – is to integrate learning as an essential component of adaptive programming on durable solutions. In Somalia, the integration of ReDSS as a learning partner within five durable solutions consortia has been identified as a key achievement for collective outcomes and coordination between donors, practitioners and government.¹⁷⁵ This has allowed the consortia to build joint monitoring frameworks, improving not only coordination but also information-sharing and peer learning within and between consortia, which can be fed into programming and policy. It has also helped improve donor

coordination across five durable solutions consortia funded by the EU, DFID, Danida and the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, and across three regions in Somalia (South West State, Jubaland and Benadir).

Closing data gaps to bridge the divide

The last two decades of (re)integration programming demonstrate that no nexus programming is possible until and unless governments agree to place (re)integration on the agenda. When durable solutions are accepted, including local integration or (re)integration in urban settings, development actors can support them. In this regard, the position of humanitarian and development actors on (re)integration has evolved, notably through data-focused initiatives.

Development actors and researchers that are invested in (re)integration across contexts have long argued that effective solutions require critical data gaps to be addressed. Data and analysis on (re)integration are insufficient across multiple dimensions.

A first gap is around the existence of comparable datasets, joint data collection and analysis on returns and (re)integration trends. A second important data gap concerns the desired outcome. There is, to date, no commonly agreed definition of the term '(re)integration'. Yet, (re)integration is the stated goal of most stakeholders working with the displaced and is considered a prerequisite for sustainable return. UNHCR's Handbook for Repatriation and Reintegration Activities defines this concept as *"a process that should result in the disappearance of differences in legal rights and duties and the equal access of returnees to services, assets and opportunities"*.¹⁷⁶ (Re)integration is, therefore, understood relative to the local host population. Beyond this intuitive truth lies a host of technical challenges when it comes to measuring the degree of integration in the context of staggering numbers of displaced people and complex patterns of mobility, overall low levels of development, recurrent conflict and a general lack of services and protection. But no common, harmonised source of information is available today to allow for a comparative assessment of the needs of refugees, returnees, IDPs and migrants to target support in the most appropriate manner. This includes the lack of a set of joint monitoring and joint information-sharing mechanisms based on standard objective/subjective indicators, qualitative and quantitative tools, and a displacement and longitudinal lens in data collection.

To address this gap, in Afghanistan in 2015 and 2016, members of the Reintegration Working Group, led by Samuel Hall and UNHCR, launched the Multi-

¹⁷⁴ Two pieces of research have analysed the security implications of refugee return and issues related to belonging and livelihoods of both refugee and IDP returns respectively: DDG (2017) Dadaab returnee conflict assessment, and Sturridge, Bakewell and Hammond (2018) Return and (Re)Integration after Displacement: Belonging, Labelling and Livelihoods in Three Somali Cities.

¹⁷⁵ ReDSS/Samuel Hall/SDRI (2019).

¹⁷⁶ UNHCR (2004), 4.

Dimensional Integration Index (MDI).¹⁷⁷ This initiative was designed to obtain a community-level view of (re)integration dynamics. This joint attempt was intended to establish a standardised framework to enable government agencies and key partners to understand and map integration processes and to assess the impact of programmes on (re)integration levels. Based on IASC global frameworks, academic standards and practitioner assessment tools, the MDI's core purpose is to measure specific displacement-related deprivations.

Pilots of this tool revealed that a contextualised approach to integration programming is crucial: the needs are not the same between different urban return areas, between rural and urban contexts, and between IDPs and returnees. In some areas, social integration was found to be high, while economic and security integration remained lacking. In others (often urban contexts), the opposite was true. Where integration scores were high (pointing to a relative similarity between hosts and the displaced), blanket targeting of the displaced may result in a relative disadvantage to host populations, with potentially negative consequences for social cohesion. Results suggested that the impact of assisted returns packages was significant in Kandahar and Herat, but negligible in a context of massive recent returns to Jalalabad in the east.¹⁷⁸ In the latter case, the fact that the differences between recent documented and undocumented returnees in terms of integration are marginal meant that the cash grants given to returnee families did not appear to contribute to integration in the short term.

In the Horn of Africa, ReDSS has developed a tool widely used for coordination, joint planning and monitoring.¹⁷⁹ The ReDSS Solutions Framework¹⁸⁰ uses 28 outcome indicators structured around physical, material and legal safety to measure durable solutions achievements in a particular context. A traffic light system has been developed to assess the status of each indicator and provide a comparative assessment between the displaced and the host community. The rating of each indicator highlights where information exists, and where more information or data are needed, to help avoid a duplication of data efforts and encourage assessments that can adequately fill information gaps. It provides a road map for agencies to design interventions that address identified gaps. ReDSS conducts periodical solutions analyses by subregions in Somalia, or on specific themes. Using the framework indicators, it provides a basis around which to engage in stronger planning, coordination and learning across time.

Such efforts can inform area-based programming, early recovery planning and types of assistance most needed in communities of return. These tools can be used as a monitoring tool for increased accountability and improved reporting standards to donors and the government. They can be locally calibrated to each location and be used by agencies to obtain better access to communities. They can serve as evidence to support advocacy, drawing critical attention to the diverse needs of urban, peri-urban and rural planning, and present the basis for harmonised monitoring and evaluation efforts.



Key Takeaways

1. Long-term monitoring and evaluation efforts, including tracking over time and in hard-to-reach areas, and joint efforts on analysis, would ensure that (re)integration programming is approached holistically by a range of actors, around a common agenda. A way forward is for joint programming to be a requirement of durable solutions programming, in order to translate monitoring and evaluation into a common strategic framework.
2. Placing (re)integration programming explicitly within research agendas, both in countries of asylum and origin, can provide the necessary link to state-building and development work.
3. There is need to set standards to monitor and measure sustainable (re)integration. There is lack of evidence and consensus among durable solutions actors on what works or does not work in the process of measuring and monitoring progress towards (re)integration. However, initiatives are underway, communities of practice have been established and require linkages to global framework processes under the CRRF and the 2019 Global Refugee Forum, and for inclusion in approaches globally.

177 Samuel Hall/UNHCR (2017a). The Multi-Dimensional Integration Index: Methodological Note.

178 Samuel Hall/UNHCR (2017b). The Multi-Dimensional Integration Index: Pilot Results.

179 ReDSS (n.d.). ReDSS Solutions Framework; see: <https://regionaldss.org/index.php/research-and-knowledge-management/solutions-framework/>

180 The ReDSS Solutions Framework builds on and operationalises the IASC framework.

10. Defining the nexus between humanitarian action, development and peacebuilding in return settings

Urban services are lacking for everyone – not just for the displaced. This brings national governance and planning to the fore. The issue here is not simply one of limited capacity or services that are not integrated; areas of return require investment in services and infrastructure. Governments need support to take the lead in facilitating broad access to services. Understanding the interrelationships between humanitarian action, development and both peacebuilding and state-building efforts can be key to durable solutions. As humanitarian needs are often a result of the absence of peace, and as protracted conflict hinders development, integrating discussions

with peace actors has to be part of the durable solutions conversation in any conflict context.

This is especially important in situations where the state-building agenda is carried out by a different set of actors than humanitarian organisations who may consider the state-building agenda too political to engage with. Agreeing on parameters of engagement across actors with different sets of principles is essential. One such parameter has to be the adherence to government-led planning. Another has to be adherence to the humanitarian–development–peace nexus (or triple nexus)¹⁸¹ that can address, sustainably, (re)integration prospects. As identified in a 2016 IASC paper, the triple nexus can be understood, “as an operational imperative where the development, humanitarian and peace-related actors need to take account of each other’s actions – and possibly collaborate – to be efficient and effective because their activities have impact on each other and each actor is affected by the broader context where peace, development and humanitarian action interacts as well”.¹⁸²



The registration desk from Bossaso, Puntland, 2015. © Axel Fassio/DRC

181 ICVA (2016). Nexus Briefing Paper. Topic 1: The “nexus” explained.

182 IASC and UN Working Group on Transitions (2016). Background paper on Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus.

Steps towards this triple nexus are underway: in Afghanistan, in 2016, the Citizens' Charter was launched, alongside the Urban National Priority Programme, to address service delivery for all. In Somalia, efforts at the state and municipal levels address durable solutions in urban settings, with a growing voice and leadership by local authorities. Between 2017 and 2019 alone, 24 pieces of legislation or policy were announced in Somalia to account for durable solutions.¹⁸³ More needs to be done to support national and sub-national actors in turning policies into reality to ensure national policies and programmes can concretely support first responders – that is, local authorities and municipal actors.

Somalia's experience demonstrates that repeated and protracted crises – albeit in a context of insecurity and state-building – can prompt longer-term developmental approaches. Many agree that the 2011 famine led to greater engagement in building resilience in the country in response to broad recognition of the need to shift from repeated, short-term, emergency-based responses to longer-term investments at the community level. As a result, numerous donors, working through consortia, have invested in significant multi-year resilience funding. The approach to durable solutions has been modelled on these principles and approaches.

A cautious approach to peacebuilding and the triple nexus

Political uncertainties prevail in Afghanistan and in Syria. In the former, peace talks and elections together create a climate of uncertainty and a tendency to wait for new developments. Important questions relate to whether the Taliban could return to power if the peace talks fail, and the implications for out-migration and the readiness of foreign governments to recognise Afghans as refugees. In Syria, the security of those in spontaneous or self-organised returns could be threatened due to the perceived role of the individuals and their families during the conflict, in particular for young men, regardless of their political leanings.

Peacebuilding conversations in Afghanistan have remained separate from discussions about durable solutions or the humanitarian–development nexus (HDN). The triple nexus – of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding efforts – has not materialised in the country. Apart from a conversation about growth post-2020 that could be included in a peace scenario and planning, efforts remain separate. There is no direct link between the HDN and the peace process in Afghanistan.

In Somalia, the possibility exists to merge plans to target the triple nexus in 2019 through greater collaboration with stabilisation actors involved in

the peacebuilding agenda. Stakeholders across the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding arenas are engaging in discussions on durable solutions. These discussions build on the strengths and know-how of stabilisation actors, such as their experience in community-based planning, infrastructure work, social cohesion efforts and urban initiatives involving civil society. Stabilisation actors' experience is seen as beneficial to the thinking and planning on durable solutions in Somalia.

10.1 Aligning humanitarian and development financing

“We have funds for humanitarian return and emergency response, not for development or sustainable (re)integration. There is a huge gap in the communities as well. We target a few villages in a district, but nearby villages with returnees will receive no support.”

(UN representative, Afghanistan)

The humanitarian–development gap is increasingly being bridged by development actors stepping in to address short- and longer-term needs. Development actors are increasingly seeking to reach backwards to bridge the gap between development and short-term emergency needs, while humanitarian actors are increasingly reaching forwards to bridge the divide between humanitarian and development needs. Both sets of actors, in turn, seek increasingly (though with more or less success in practice) to engage governments, strengthening their ability and will to drive development policy and durable solutions planning. The lesson learnt is that (re)integration requires the commitment of government, development planners and donors. The humanitarian–development–peacebuilding nexus depends on opportunities offered by governments and funding released by donors.

There are structural and financial reasons for gaps between humanitarian and development aid.¹⁸⁴ Integrated planning – and using aid and services to integrate returnees, IDPs and hosts – will remain a theory as long as funding is not aligned. The fact that more funds are invested in returns than in (re)integration has prevented actors from supporting a global discussion on (re)integration. No global policy commitments or funding facility are currently on the World Bank horizon. However, successful initiatives and ad hoc practices on (re)integration are taking place in Somalia and Afghanistan. Key informants argue that, until there

183 ReDSS/Samuel Hall/SDRI (2019).

184 NRC/FAO/UNDP (2019). Financing the nexus: Gaps and opportunities from a field perspective.

are identifiable sources of funding for (re)integration (whether this comes as a dedicated funding source or is anchored in existing development funding mechanisms), these steps will constitute nothing more than innovative projects achieving results – and will remain disparate.

There is growing evidence of what development funding can achieve through support for (re)integration. In Somalia, European Union funding has launched multi-year consortia working on (re)integration in urban and rural areas. The EU has set an example for other donors, such as DFID and Danida, to support the durable solutions agenda in Somalia. In Afghanistan, the same level of strategic funding has not materialised. A lack of coherence in donor funding means that, whilst all pieces of the (re)integration puzzle are being funded, the approach is not coordinated.

The approach in Somalia has been to fund multiple durable solutions consortia, combining UN and NGO efforts to directly support the government at the federal and state levels, with multi-year funding and a programme-based – as opposed to a project-based – approach. In Afghanistan, the work has been less cohesive and subject to contestation. The Joint Way Forward came under criticism for facilitating returns at a time of increasing conflict in the country, with

NGOs claiming that conditions were not conducive to returns. In line with the new European Consensus on Development¹⁸⁵ and the Joint Way Forward,¹⁸⁶ the European Union, through its Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development, funds various migration projects in Afghanistan. EU-funded actions on return and (re)integration, internal displacement, intra-regional migration and migration management for 2016–2020 amount to over 200 million euros. These are not tied to a common vision or a coherent pursuit of collective outcomes in the country of return. The EU in Afghanistan could learn from the EU in Somalia to take on more flexible, long-term and consortium-focused funding to address multidimensional needs and locally led approaches, and to include a learning partner to support. Lessons from Somalia and other emerging initiatives constitute a basis for the humanitarian–development–peace nexus (see Box 11). This supports the finding that it is easier to establish coherence among donor agendas when their other geopolitical interests converge, and if donor governments do not have conflicting interests. It is about politics and donor coordination – not just the lack of skills or capacity.

Box 11. Emerging Initiatives by Development Actors

In Afghanistan and Somalia, World Bank initiatives have the potential to support (re)integration and to bridge gaps. Work in both countries focuses on reinforcing responses in urban settings through infrastructure, service provision and jobs.

In Afghanistan, the EZ-KAR project plans to address the overall environment – including the regulatory framework – for development and job creation in return areas. It will aim for the economic integration of returnees in urban and peri-urban areas through the Citizens’ Charter and the Cities Investment Program and through support to municipalities. The initiatives will total US\$200 million.

In Somalia, infrastructure and technical support provided by the World Bank in support of the Federal Government of Somalia has reinforced capacity to address two urban solutions: the Somali Urban Investment Planning Project and the Somalia Urban Resilience Project now integrate displacement-affected communities in their planning. The World Bank is launching a preparatory process to consult with community and government stakeholders and to set up a project implementation unit at the municipal level within the Benadir Regional Administration (BRA). The work has two goals:

- to establish measures to ensure evictions are avoided during and after the end of the project
- to work with solutions consortia to provide alternative security of tenure for IDPs in project areas

In discussions with IOM and DFID, the World Bank intends to map all IDP settlements in the project target areas, identify any available public land for resettlement and study rental subsidy options. This is the start of an area-based plan and discussion with partners.

These solutions will take time to put into practice. They have the benefit of working with and through the government to create sustainability. In the meantime, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the German Development Agency (GIZ) are developing a road map on services, livelihoods and capacity-building. In Afghanistan, UNDP is leading an assessment of service provision for returnees once they cross the border, while GIZ is supporting the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry to support returnees through training and placement in trades, thereby complementing the education sector.ⁱ

i ACCI (2018). ACCI provides internship program for Afghan Private business.

185 European Union. International Cooperation and Development – Building partnerships for change in developing countries.

186 European Union/Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Joint Way Forward on migration issues.

10.2 (Re)integration programming in a context of emergencies, drought and instability: learning from Afghanistan

The difficulty in bridging the humanitarian–development–peace nexus is affected by the context of conflict, insecurity and disasters, which heightens the need for life-saving measures and the imperative for humanitarians to focus on an emergency response. In 2019, the Afghan government and the World Bank took steps to bridge the divide by ensuring that development partners are more invested in life-saving measures. A first discussion, in 2018, between multilateral and multisectoral stakeholders, addressed the drought response. The partners agreed to: discuss ways to hand over humanitarian response; engage in mid-term responses over a one-to-three-year timeframe; and consider the longer-term response, with actions by development and government actors needed to tackle systemic issues such as water scarcity, adjustments in

agricultural practices and providing the right information to people to boost their resilience. The emphasis is on providing social support and other assistance in drought-prone areas to help households become resilient. While the conversation is a useful starting point, it must be accompanied by concrete activities in order to have an impact. In addition, the same conversation could be widened to determine how to support and help those resuming or launching livelihoods in urban areas.

Since 2002, humanitarian funding to Afghanistan has dropped by an estimated 70%. Furthermore, the 2018 drought has pushed actors towards emergency response, with a limited number of agencies still working on (re)integration. Programming continues to focus on life-saving measures, basic services, food and non-food distribution and shelter. The trend is more towards humanitarian response and less so towards durable solutions.¹⁸⁷ Since early 2018, attention has also turned towards internal displacement, protracted conflict and IDPs rather than returnee response. While returns peaked in 2016, the subsequent slowdown has focused



DRC distributing firewood in the settlements in Kabul, Afghanistan, 2013. © Erick Gerstner/DRC

187 Key informant interview with Welthungerhilfe Afghanistan (March 2019).

attention on humanitarian crises, internal displacement, peace and elections.

To better understand what actors are doing along the humanitarian and development spectrum, the Afghan government, under the leadership of the Ministry of Finance, is conducting a protocol review of all UN work in the country. The idea is to seek clarity on actions and results in three areas:

- understanding the government's plans for a long-term assistance and response framework
- ensuring that humanitarian action is coordinated based on core competencies and coverage

- establishing a link between drought and (re)integration through national priority programmes

The government's response is clear: some contexts require a flexible definition of the humanitarian–development nexus. Beyond that, in the long run, the government should focus on including both development and humanitarian partners within humanitarian response. As a result, hopes for a humanitarian–development nexus can only materialise if development actors support the transition to early recovery.



Key Takeaways

1. The adoption of common programming principles – a key feature of resilience and development planning – can ensure commitment to processes, such as community-based programming, that support durable solutions.
2. Initiatives are underway to strengthen the voices and inclusion of displacement-affected communities, and to make those voices heard by decision-makers. These include, for example, the establishment of a common social accountability platform in Somalia.
3. Integrated approaches under a 'one settlement plan' are required to turn land-based solutions into stepping stones for durable solutions, focusing on housing, rather than shelter, and on configured, planned and connected city extensions.

Durable Solutions Platforms and Secretariat



Steering Committee



Research Team



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